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# MY HARVEST

RICHARD WHITEING

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# MY HARVEST

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BY

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ETC.

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# CONTENTS


CHAPTER I

PAGE

ATTE BOWE . . . . . 1

CHAPTER II

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLMASTERS . . . . . 17

CHAPTER III

COLLEGE . . . . . 30

CHAPTER IV

LITTLE GRUB STREET . . . . . 45

CHAPTER V

FLEET STREET . . . . . 59

CHAPTER VI

PARIS AGAIN . . . . . 76

CHAPTER VII

INTERVIEWING . . . . . 93

CHAPTER VIII

SPAIN IN REVOLUTION . . . . . 108

CHAPTER IX

PAGE

PROVINCES AND METROPOLE . . . . . 123

CHAPTER X

REPUBLICAN FRANCE . . . . . 135

CHAPTER XI

KING VICTOR HUGO . . . . . 147

CHAPTER XII

A RUSSIAN REALIST . . . . . 158

CHAPTER XIII

PRUSSIANIZED HISTORY . . . . . 171

CHAPTER XIV

THE REAL ASIAN MYSTERY . . . . . 188

CHAPTER XV

AMERICA IN FACT AND FANCY . . . . . 206

CHAPTER XVI

FRANCE HERSELF AGAIN . . . . . 221

CHAPTER XVII

PEOPLE AND THINGS . . . . . 238

CHAPTER XVIII

PAGE

Victorian London . . . . . 254

CHAPTER XIX

Literature and Journalism . . . . . 268

CHAPTER XX

Clubs . . . . . 288

CHAPTER XXI

Salons . . . . . 297

CHAPTER XXII

Faiths and Unfaiths . . . . . 304

CHAPTER XXIII

Threshing Out . . . . . 317

## CHAPTER I

### ATTE BOWE

LIFE has been called a scene of adventure tempered by a little philosophy on the way. It is not exactly my view, but the majority incline to it as the only one that reconciles the rule of thumb to self-respect. Hence, I suppose, the fascination of pure romance in *The Arabian Nights*, *Gil Blas*, *Tom Jones*, or even at a distance from these, the egregious *Roderick Random* with the due subservience of its hopes of immortality. The earlier romances are mostly of this cast; and I should be glad to get the benefit of it, if only I could plead their license of invention. Happily the adventure being sometimes in the nature of spiritual experience, does not always involve shipwreck and the shooting of lions. But it is invariably events and incidents first, and the moral, if anywhere, only at the end of the journey. The old masters at any rate usually began with a birth as the greatest of all accidents, and never stopped till they had got their hero married at least, and not seldom comfortably entombed.

I was born, alas! as far back as 1840; and there is still so much to see. My father held a modest place in the Inland Revenue Office at Somerset

House. He was of a stock of Yorkshire farmers whose tombstones standing to this day under the shadow of Beverley minster—usually bore the word "yeoman" to show that they were tillers of their own land. They had everything proper to their rustic state including a family Bible dated 1639, and still extant. My sire seems to have been the first of the line to make the great venture of London—walking all the way and carrying his own rations to keep the little hoard in his pocket intact. My mother—well, if I had the genius of Barrie, she should have a book all to herself. When I lost her fostering care, the lonely man was lucky enough to find rooms suited to his means in what was then the classic land of the London lodging-house, Norfolk Street, Strand. The fine old street has been rebuilt: it is all stately offices now; it was then a double line of Georgian façades, where you had to lodge, if you wanted to do so in a certain style. Hotels were few, and most of them dear and comfortless with unpleasant suggestions of the public-house. Mr. Spectator, it will be remembered, had rooms in Norfolk Street as far back as the reign of Queen Anne. Peter the Great once stayed there; and since then the place had had time to rise from its Hanoverian ashes and still to mellow into the beauty of age in which I knew it as a boy. It sloped towards the river, without meeting the embrace; and the only way of getting out of it was to retrace your steps to their starting point in the Strand. From a lofty terrace, its railings rusty with years, you looked down on Thames, sweet or

otherwise as the case might be, and needing no poetical apostrophe to induce it to take its course softly to the sea. There was usually something to look at—a Lord Mayor's procession, a boat race, rowed in topper hats, an old-fashioned man of business on his way to the City in a boat pulled by a nice ruffianly sort of waterman—on gala days perhaps in coat and badge. And where these failed, there was always, moored right in the line of the street, the very ship in which Captain Cook circumnavigated the globe, picking up continents on his way. It was now a floating lock-up for the rascaldom of the river—we are matchless among the nations for pleasantries of this sort. No inscription proclaimed its great achievements in every clime, no flourish of trumpets, nor even a bo'sun's whistle sounded a Whitmanian *salut* to the seas of the world from its timbers steeped in their brine. For most of us who gazed it was a question, not of what feet of Argonautic heroes had once trod its deck, but only of what variety of river scum had taken their places.

Within, as without, the old street was all beauty of domestic architecture, with a suggestion of retirement and of perfect peace. There were four stories to the houses, counting the garrets, cavernous subterranean kitchens importing a bridge over the well in which they lay, and beneath these, regions of impenetrable darkness where the coal was stored, and where an adventurous infant sometimes went to look for ghosts or listen for rats for the fearful joy of successful flight. The back garden of my own particular house of dream had

disappeared save for one big surviving tree that threw a welcome shade over the whole place in summer time. In the winter it dripped what I must still call cosy desolation over a clean paved yard, to urge you indoors for the comfort of a hobbed fire-place and a footstool. This yard, with an old summer-house to keep it in countenance, was all that was left of the floral associations of the past; but its type, in pictorial presentation forever, is to be found in some of the Dutch works at the National Gallery. The style came to us with William of Orange, and it was but a copy of a copy in the Georgian time. The rich West Indian or American planter went to Norfolk Street for all he wanted in substantial comfort as it was understood in that day—a spacious reception room overlooking the street, wherein also he dined at four o'clock. It was the fashionable hour, as it gave him time to sit over his wine before starting for the theatres, nearly all in a bunch within a stone's throw, or for the wilder dissipation of the Cider Cellars, with Evans's supper-room to follow for the wind up. The wealthier people brought a servant or two with them. But there were all sorts, from these swells of the drawing-room to the single gentleman class, like my father, who had but a bedroom to his name, and who took his meals, by arrangement, with the landlord and housekeeper in their private room. The perfect suite for the nabobs included a bedroom leading out of a sitting-room, and beyond, a dressing-room that might hold a bed at a pinch. What more could you have, or at any rate what more did you get in

that age? It was the height of dignity and dash. They took your orders in the morning for the meals of the day, bought the provisions in accordance, cooked them, stored the remains to your credit as the dishes were removed. It imported much cold mutton for customers of a thrifty class, but the remedy was at hand in the shape of a whole shopful of pickles and sauces in the neighbouring Strand.

It was really a fine thing to be born at such a time, because it marked the opening of that Victorian period which marks a most significant parting of the ways of English social life. It was all so delightfully new as we saw it. The cry was "our young Queen and our Old Constitution," as succeeding the shibboleths of the immediately antecedent William and the Georges, most of whom never had a youth of hope. We were all going to turn over a new leaf and be good under the benignant influence of a virgin monarch to whom any sort of moral imperfection was simply a thing unknown.

But I couldn't live at a loose end, in even the best of lodging-houses. There was my education to think of. I was rising eight, I fancy, ere I attacked but the second of the three R's. I could not shape a pot-hook, and had never handled a pen except to break it. It was to be school, and boarding school at that; the lonely man could think of nothing better. Behold me then, not without tears from the housekeeper and the maids, on the way, under parental convoy, to Bromley-by-Bow, then just out of range of the London smoke.

I had given no tears in return, being full of pleasurable delight in a new school box, *mine*, and its new outfit. All had contributed something—the old lodging-house keeper a new hat, a topper in real beaver, as they wore them in that day. How the father had come to his choice of an academy for young gentlemen I know not, perhaps by advertisement, but he had been wisely led. Bromley-by-Bow was dotted all over with fine old buildings, and one of them was a palace ancient of days. Mary Stuart's son, James the First of England, and the Scottish Sixth had come south to unite the warring crowns, and being fond of hunting he had begun in a kingly way by making a sylvan solitude for himself with its starting point at Bromley, and calling it a chase. Bromley was then a lovely village, and it remained so to the time of my first acquaintance with it. The old palace, the private school to which I was taken, was the loveliest thing in it, not of course in conscious realization to me, but simply in beauty of illusive suggestion—all I wanted at that age, perhaps all one wants at any. Imagine then the old gabled building all wainscot down to its meanest rooms, and in its great hall a glory of rich carving, arabesqued ceiling, and fire-places as elaborate to scale as a cathedral porch. It stood in its own grounds, and nothing ugly was there, or mean, within sight or sound of it. The playground was a clearing in the forest with still many of the oldest trees in their place. The light that never was on sea or shore was to be identified at last between them and the skies in a *chiaroscuro* of

sunshine seen through the leafage of spring. The schoolmaster's walled garden was of the peace that passeth understanding, with a mulberry tree in the garden that was our tree of life too when it yielded pie as an extra on days of festival. Beyond our bounds it was all loveliness still—on the one side an orchard where an old-fashioned farmer raised fruit for the London market, on others the plough land where he raised corn. He was no doubt unfortunate in his neighbours of the orchard boundary, but what he lost in that respect was our gain. For, according to all the rules, a boy's education ought to include the pilfering of apples as a preparation for the adventurous work of life. From them the hero proceeds to islands, and to empires later on. The practice has grown into disuse in our day, but the girl queen was as keen for it as any of her predecessors. An orchard to rob, and no questions asked, would be a positive recommendation for a seat of learning in our spiritless time. Nothing ugly, I said, or mean anywhere within reach of us. For, again beyond bounds, it was but the old Seven Stars Inn gabled and wainscotted like the rest, or a tuck-shop with bull's-eyed window-panes that played fantastic tricks in optics with the items of the stock.

And then for the dignity of age in the associations, if we had either known or cared, think of the neighbouring church to which we were marched for the Sunday services. The very hunting lodge was nothing to it in that respect. For here we were on the site of Chaucer's convent-church "scole of

Stratford atte Bowe," not to be confounded with the other Bow church, but a bowshot from it, in the main road—a first offence in punning that shall also be the last. Still less to be confounded with the one in Cheapside. Everybody goes to these, guide-book in hand, few carry the pilgrimage as far as my old church—mine and Chaucer's, in regard to the identity of the sites. I am right glad of it. I give it away in writing indeed—for how resist the temptation ? and yet inconsistently I want its memories all to myself. The convent was venerable for its antiquity even when Chaucer knew it as part of a Benedictine nunnery founded by the Conqueror. The present church now calls itself St. Leonard's, after the name of its parish; but St. Mary's it was, and should be, for all time. Fragments of the old building were walled into the new one when it was rebuilt in 1842—perhaps as we now lace concrete with steel to make it last to the crack of doom—among them a slab of Purbeck that marks the resting-place of a knight and his wife buried there in 1336. Witness, too, another really exhilarating tombstone of a later date.

> As nurses striue
> theire Babes in bed to lay
> When they too ly-berally
> the wantons play
> So to preuente
> his farther growinge crimes,
> Nature his nurse
> gott him to bed betimes.

For nigh eight hundred years end on end they have closed evening service on that spot with "Lighten our darkness," either in the English

liturgy or in the Roman original. With its cadences, said or sung, and worthy alike of the end of a day or the end of a life, it was, I think, about the first bit of " established " religion that got fairly into my soul.

I don't mean to say we were fully sense-conscious of all this delicate perfume of time in church and school, but still something of it was there. More might have been found in the former case, if they had not contrived to associate the morning services with a fine of pudding for the offence of going to sleep during sermon—and, worse luck, Sunday was the only pudding day. A wretched usher surveyed all the file for this lapse, which I daresay he was only prevented from repeating by having to make a note of the names. These were called over after the joint, and their owners had to rise and march out. The bigger boys pretended that it had its compensations, as, once outside, you might swear without risk of detection. All, I think, would have preferred the chance of the pudding.

Our " Head " was the mildest mannered Church of England parson that ever ruled an urchin mob. His name was Stammers, and he bought the school of the widow of a Mr. Safe, who, to this day, has his tombstone near the door of the church. He is in good company of celebrities dead, gone and forgotten —worshipful citizens whose worship ended with their lives, a sprinkling of Huguenot exiles, and no doubt many a golden lad and girl long since gone to dust, with the local chimney-sweeper. Some of the tombs have been shifted, but on the whole the

old place is pretty much as it was in my time. Mr. Safe was a stern disciplinarian. Mr. Stammers was of quite different stuff. He, and his maiden sister to match, were all beaming benevolence and goodness of heart. I doubt if ever he laid violent hands on any fellow-creature in his life. On taking charge, he publicly proclaimed from his desk that he had the strongest objection to flogging, not, as he assured us, on humanitarian grounds, but only because he was naturally of a nature so ferocious that he shrank from the very thought of the consequences to the offenders. It was understood that his blows would be death or maiming for life, and he implored us for our sakes, and his own, never to put him to the proof. We had only to be reasonable in misdoing to be sure of every consideration for our persons, and meanwhile he would be content to chasten by impositions. We were much impressed, myself in particular, yet it fell out that I was the first to put myself beyond the means of grace. I had wantonly launched a speculative stone, in the nature of a bolt from the blue, through the window at which he and his sister sat at tea. He harangued us on the incident to the effect that he had to draw the line at utter depravity, and he gloomily ordered me to follow him to his room. I did so with the feeling that I was making premature acquaintance with the end of all things, and my sobs rent the air. Yet these were nothing to my roar as the cane fell on my shoulders from a dizzy height that threatened annihilation. I am bound to say I was agreeably disappointed in the result. It was what I after-

wards learned to recognize as a stage blow, and it fell with almost the softness of a caress. It was the same with the few that followed, though I roared on by way of payment in advance for what was sure to come. In fact nothing happened, not even a cloud of dust from my jacket. The dear old chap!

But we were soon to be stirred by fiercer excitements, almost imperial in their scope. Suddenly London began to loom large on the sight of our sylvan retreat. It was the year of the Chartist rising of the '48. What a year! It thrilled all Europe with terror and wrath. It gave the impulse that peopled America: the great emigration set in with—"To the West, to the West, to the Land of the Free," sung under the silent stars specially benignant in their watch over the boats that carried the hungry horde. And what a day of all its days when the Chartists called their meeting at Kennington Common. Kennington was then to London proper what Brooklyn was to New York, a sort of glorified village "on the other side of the water" where old-fashioned people led leisurely lives. The London mob was to march there for a great demonstration in furtherance of the demand for a charter of popular rights. Anything might happen on their return, primed with oratory, desperate with the sense of wrong, wild with the sense of opportunity in a luxurious capital lying at their mercy. That was all we knew about it in forecast, and most of our betters, the grown-ups who formed public opinion, were in the same plight of invincible ignorance. It

was a lurid programme. "Mein Gott, vat a city for to pillage," said old Blucher, when he drove through the London streets after the peace of 1814.

So on the great day we had our special messenger to the capital to examine and report. The dear old Head, self-chosen, was naturally the man. He set off in the morning as to an heroic adventure, and with us, of course, sleep was out of the question till his return. We discussed his mission in the dormitories, squatting on the beds in our night gear, not unlike Indians round the camp fire. Our room, and every other I daresay, had its tactician and its politician, as leaders of the pow-wow. The politician was severe on the rabble—boys are mostly born snobs—and he made the running for the tactician who undertook to show how they were to be massacred to a man. The Duke of Wellington, "conqueror of Napoleon," was in command of the troops, and our military adviser, being apparently deep in his counsels, assured us that he knew his plan. The insurgents were to be prevented from getting to Kennington at all costs, and to find themselves penned in their tracks by horse, foot, and artillery, and reduced to mincemeat. Mincemeat it had to be: nothing less would content us. In imagination we listened like the dwellers in sacked cities seen in dreams, breathless, cowering behind closed doors for the first shrieks of death. Yet we would not have foregone those shrieks for all the world. We wanted our thrill. Imagine our disgust then when we had to learn from the home-coming parson that

there had been nothing of the sort. The Duke seemed to have entirely missed his opportunity. He allowed the enemy a free crossing to the side of the river where there was no mischief to be done, but when they came back at night, angry, hungry, footsore, they found the bridges barred and the sullen cannon between them and the palaces, public offices, banks, and what was still more of a hardship for the poor creatures, their miserable homes. They were filtered over in detachments at last, and kept on the run till they reached their hovels dead beat, and the day of doom ended in their utter discomfiture without the firing of a shot. The dear old Head called it a greater victory than Waterloo, and suggested prayers for the merciful victor. He had them all to himself.

It was impossible to quiet down after such excitements. There was a fight in our dormitory next morning, what about I forget. The principals were a leading politician and your humble servant, both in nightgowns—such was our ardour for the fray. I won—by a fluke, and I make no boast of it. In one of those wrestles for the fall, then fashionable in contests of this sort, my opponent's head struck the floor. The hollowness of the sound seemed to preclude all possible danger of concussion, but he gave in. I don't know why, but something prompted me to kiss him. My second frowned.

"Stash it, little 'un; that sort of thing isn't done here."

The victim himself seemed to submit to it only

as he might have submitted to a poultice. It was my first anti-climax and I took it to heart.

In due course I heard from my father how the day had passed with him. As a Government officer, he was, so to speak, pressed for the service of the special constabulary. It was a Falstaffian army, though in broadcloth instead of rag-tag and bobtail, and everybody who had a character or a position to lose was expected to join. The Government issued truncheons and a badge for the arm; old soldiers improvised a rough drill. Somerset House was guarded by these old employees, mostly the cankers of a long peace, men who had never struck a blow in anger since they left the playground. They were useful no doubt as a moral example, but they would probably have been a terror to their own side if it had come to the touch. Cowardice had nothing to do with it; it was simply the lack of the habit of strife. Their office was now their guard-room, and they roystered there in true military style. A generous administration supplied provender and moderate potations, and here and there a blade who felt he had missed his vocation rollicked in a song, "A soldier's a man; a life's but a span; why, then, let a soldier drink." As a variant, yet still on a military motive, another gave "The Banks of Allan Water." Though an officer of the department, this one had been excused from attendance because he was a dwarf, but he had insisted on remaining, with the result that my father never forgot this song. He said that it was the most beautiful thing he had ever heard, and he bought it in broad sheet, as they sold songs

at that time, for his delectation in old age. He had many projects for the period of his retirement from the service: one was to learn to smoke.

I think he shed tears over the song, though he would never own to that. He had the English horror of the display of emotion. In the gravest event of his life, I saw him giving way, not at the eyes, but only at the chin. The latter was crumpled up in corrugated folds, and seemed to shrink for shelter within his ample stock, saving his face in the upper part, and hiding its loss in the rest. But he was tender in his own way on visiting days. Perhaps, as to demonstrations, he was a little checked by the majesty of the surroundings. Such meetings took place in the state room of the old palace, parent and child sitting by a fireless fire-place, cavernous, vast, as measured by the proportions of a small boy. They talked only as freely as they dared, with a surmounting Royal Arms—as one might say life-size over the mantel to keep them on their good behaviour. Once, when he thought nobody was looking, he took me on his knee. But he soon set me down again—perhaps as having caught the eye of the unicorn.

I sometimes go to look at the fire-place now, not *in situ* in its palace, but at South Kensington Museum, where fragments of it were providentially intercepted on their way to the house-breaker's yard. Years and years after I first knew it, the old place had to die the death to make way for a highly developed slum, with rows of mean houses effacing the glorious playground and the orchards, and in their midst a barrack-like School Board

building to make weak amends. The details of desecration were shocking, but the County Council was able to save something at the eleventh hour, and to preserve the memory of the rest in a monograph on "The Parish of Bromley-by-Bow," with which I have but one fault to find, that it is not printed in letters of gold.

As I stand by the old fire-place in the public museum, I seem to be once more in that dim Victorian abysm of time. Then in a leap I am back in fancy to a still earlier day, with Mary Stuart's son—and perhaps Steenie and Baby Charles to keep him company—slobbering his hunting jokes at the feast that followed the death of the stag and the *curée* in the courtyard, with all the Georgian ages and their festivals between. To think of that, and then of M. Bergson's placid assurance that there are no yesterdays and no to-morrows, but only one river of Now in everlasting torrent—pa-ta-tra!

## CHAPTER II

### SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLMASTERS

BUT presently I was taken from the old school. Somebody, perhaps a nebulous aunt in far-away Yorkshire, had given my father a good talking to on the subject of my need of "mothering." Truth to tell I was a bit too young to be without a woman's care, for the change came shortly after the '48. Behold me then transferred to St. John's Wood, to the house of an old sailor, retired on his laurels as an ex-Navy man, and on his savings as a jerry-builder after his discharge. His wife was warranted capable of the mothering, though the couple had no children of their own. I was a sort of plaything for them, and they made much of me, insisting on my calling them 'father' and 'mother,' and generally getting all the benefit of having young life in the house. They were nearing their sixties. The old man was one of few words, but I think he liked to have me near him, pulling his things about, and generally giving him the excuse for administering what he called the rope's end, in the shape of a cuff. He was a product of the old press-gang system. The gang had swept down on him one fine day when he was leaving his work as a bricklayer, and carried him aboard a man-of-war to go and fight the

Americans in the war of 1812. It was astonishing how little he had to say about that contest, or anything else in life. He was one of the taciturn sort, and was, moreover, afflicted with asthma, which is a great promoter of that frame of mind. I have sometimes wondered whether he knew what the war was about. He made no boast of his share in it, he said nothing depreciatory of the enemy: he just grunted "takin' o' Washington in America, 1814," and left it there. On the rare occasions on which he took a drop too much—once a quarter or so, when he broke out for a day—he was more expansive. But it was not in the Pindaric vein. He loved ditties of sentiment —"On the Banks of the Shannon when Sheila was nigh," such is my perhaps poor recollection of the opening line. His wife, who could be tuneful without the aid of stimulants, sang "Arms and the Man," to the theme of General Wolfe and his glorious death at the taking of Quebec. She was aware of it as a real live issue, having learned it, and little else, of her mother who lived to a great age. Between them I got my first notions of the epic theme of history. Meantime, as I gradually improved in my reading, I picked up anything that came in my way, among the rest notably *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when it reached us in England —I think in 1852. So, after a fashion, I became aware of some of the most decisive events in American story, ranging from Montcalm to Mrs. Stowe as the precursor of the great Civil War.

I have often thought how little in this way would serve to carry us back to the remoter past. If we

imagine a succession of ancestors of ninety giving their recollections to infants of eight, who passed them on, with the accretions of experience, at the same advanced age, we should soon have a human chain of very few links to the latest events of our own time. I am too lazy to work it out, but ten, or at most eleven, of these oral chroniclers should bring us right back to Senlac and Norman William, with his all-compelling mace that gave the Saxon peasant a sort of hereditary headache in presence of his superiors, from which he suffers to this very day. The written chroniclers, with their huge superfluity of detail, give an impression of distance which is wholly illusory: a garrulous grandfather or two would soon carry us back to the *Mayflower*.

St. John's Wood at that time was a village under the lee of London, very much like the Bromley-by-Bow which I had left. It had and has the distinction of being our first garden city of the modern variety made on a scheme of town-planning to a definite end. Its rise synchronized with the period at which the prosperous London tradesman ceased to live over the shop of which his family, at least, had grown ashamed. The new settlement had of course to be within an easy drive of town. His chariot, or the stage coach, took him to business in the morning, and brought him back at night to his villa and his wife and daughters—the latter a distinct part of his state as including the harp among their accomplishments. On Sundays, somewhat later on, he went to worship at St. John's Wood Chapel, and listened to an evangelical

preacher in a Geneva gown. His gardens perhaps sloped down to the new canal—the "Regent's Canal" to this day, to help fix the date. Or if he was for more style, it was at hand in the range of mansions which Nash and others were building all round the brand new Regent's Park. For all we now say against it, there has been no bolder attempt to make London a second Rome of Augustus if only in stucco. They had a great sense of vista, and they gave us our great palatial terraces, York, Chester, Cornwall, and what not, wherein the detail of individual ownership is lost in the imposing mass of the general plan. The effect for the beholder, especially for the foreigner, was that Cæsar or his modern equivalent, had one terrace all to himself and Mæcenas another. In St. John's Wood there was more of the personal touch, but the general character was the same. One villa, nestling among the surviving trees of the forest out of which the whole district was hewn, was the Horace of the translators, in the smug retirement of stage rocks, running rills, and willows weeping their genial sorrows into glassy pools. The great peace that followed the downfall of Napoleon is commemorated to this hour in the names of some of the thoroughfares. Douro Cottages was Wellington in his chrysalis state, Wellington Road marks the height of his glory: meek little Woronzow Road stands for the great Russian diplomatist, and so on. The fiery Lord Dundonald, one of the illustrious mercenaries that helped to found South America, under his family name of Cochrane, still has a street all to himself.

Into this classic village there came one day to settle a schoolmaster, a French refugee. But few of us knew him for that at the time: it was a later discovery. In name, if not in appearance, he was as good an Englishman as the best of us. He passed as a Mr. Howard. His English had nothing particular the matter with it to our uncritical ears: it was only his looks that failed him a little in the character.

He was a pure-blooded meridional, I should say —a Roman nose, jet black hair, a long sallow face, a blazing eye—the raw material of the ideologist, in every place and clime. After knowledge showed him as a wild man of the French revolution that started on its second grand tour of Europe in 1848. He went through it all, as one of the Reds, whom Cavaignac had to mow down by thousands to save the Republic from itself, and keep the vessel of state with its head to the wind. Of course he was on the beaten side—that is to say, with the extremists. They made a good fight for it—Paris in a state of siege for four months; horse, foot, and artillery in the streets, especially artillery; the Faubourg du Temple pounded into submission, and the end in a regular capitulation as between army and army. Naturally such a man was one of the first to get killed or exiled under the *coup d'état* in '51. Louis Napoleon, Prince President, had no use for the long-haired, especially when they happened to be of the class of college professors, as was this one.

He came to our shores, I daresay, without waiting to pack his trunk, but with a most extra-

ordinary outfit of hopes and dreams. He had the best culture in the gift of France, could read the stiffest classics like a newspaper, and as a man of letters was everything that he was not as a Republican. On the barricades, I am sure, there was no getting him to listen to reason; in his class room no getting him to listen to anything else—a man in two distinct pieces never quite joined. Before the open page, especially when it was in Greek or Latin, he was all for tradition, restraint, measure, and the horror of the needless word. He was not without means in his flight. He took a villa, put forms and desks in its small breakfast-room, and opened a school which he never thought of calling classical, because it never entered his mind that it could be anything else. Pupils dropped in, myself among them, because the old sailor thought I was not getting on properly with my writing; and, as they came, whatever their ages, sizes, or opportunities in life, they were immediately put into the classic tongues.

What a school! what a master! In a few months we were nibbling even Greek with him, and he was giving us a sort of foretaste of the great tragedies. How he did it I don't quite know, but there it was. The lessons were delightful. It was a revel of the mighty line, with war and adventure, heroes, gods, and goddesses, and life abounding for its theme. We took to it as ducks to water, never suspecting that it might be a poor preparation for our destined lot of the small clerkship, or the place behind the counter. The sailor waived the point of the penmanship, when he saw the

crabbed characters in my exercise book, or at any rate was disposed to take them as a new variety of ornamental writing by which he set great store. The master "jawed" us into fine thoughts, wise or foolish as the case might be. Every lesson was a long talk about everything, including the shortcomings of things British—the glory of things French in art and arms. We learned to be ashamed of Waterloo as a battle won by a fluke. He would tell us with trembling lip of the day when France was beset with "twice one million men," not forgetting to mention the advantage of putting it that way for rhetorical effect.

Then suddenly it all came to an end. My father was shown one of my Greek exercises, and sniffed, still keeping his thoughts to himself. On a second visit he was confronted by a proposal of the master to put the whole school into uniform next term, on the model of the École Polytechnique. With that his patience broke down. It was military: a thing he hated; it meant needless outlay; it gave no outlook for the future in accordance with his plans. I was taken away and sent to a cheap adventurer in useful knowledge who had lately come into the neighbourhood. The sociable heathen of Olympus, in so far as I had made their acquaintance, faded out of my ken, and I was never to have a second chance. It was a pity. The creature had a way with him whatever it was, for I have forgotten its details. All I know is that he made us love what is generally the most odious part of a schoolboy's task, the learning of the tongues. I think our declensions and conjugations came to

us only as they occurred in the text, and in a sort of revival of Cowley's method of learning not books from grammar, but grammar from books.

I recovered my patriotism, however, by watching the Household Brigade, then quartered in the adjacent barracks, as they marched out in all the glory of pipe-clay and pioneers for the morning parade. In a couple of years more came the great break in the long peace; and our Victorian Grenadiers were sent out to have their bones bleached in the Crimea.

My father, deeply pondering, had determined to give me an artistic calling that should, at the same time, be a sort of business yielding practical results in a "living." His choice fell on one of the oldest in the world, as then practised by Benjamin Wyon, who bore the title of "Chief Engraver of Her Majesty's Seals," and who was addressed by her in his letter of appointment as "Our Trusty and Well Beloved." He engraved the great seal of England, with the girl queen crowned in her chair of state on one side, and on the other sallying forth on horseback to execute justice and mercy, sceptre in hand. For a thing of this kind it is on the colossal scale, a glorified cheese plate in its circumference of solid silver, for an impression affixed to every grant of a patent or other document specially issued by the Crown. But it is a case of the tail wagging the dog: you have to lift the seal and leave the parchment to scramble after as well as it can. It is in the keeping of the Lord Chancellor, and its occasional transference from

him to a successor is a ceremony of almost religious solemnity. It is carried on these occasions by a special officer well rewarded for his pains, and in an embroidered bag bearing the Royal Arms. The theft of the great seal from the house of Lord Thurlow in an earlier reign was an event of historic importance, and till its recovery all the machinery of State seemed to be at a standstill. Why might not I, my father mused, in time to come, win fortune and even fame as successor to my master. His services were constantly in requisition. If others made history, he chronicled it in enduring bronze as an engraver of medals. His composition for the Crimean War—yet to come—was a victorious Roman soldier crowned by the Angel of Peace. He had seen us through smaller troubles of this nature, I fancy, in the Indian wars. The Shakespeare medal, with all the chief characters of the plays as a kind of family party, was also his work. Whatever was done in this line was usually by a Wyon: they were a kind of engraving clan with William Wyon as its chief—Royal Academician and Engraver to the Mint. One of his masterpieces was the head of the youthful Victoria, idealized, and yet a likeness, which figured on the earliest of her coins, and gave the note even for the postage stamps. His Italian predecessor, Pistrucci, engraved the Waterloo medal, with the help of his daughter and pupil; the old widower and the old maid working side by side to the last, and wholly sufficient to themselves.

The art is really a branch of the Quietist cult: it tends to teach you the nothingness of all passing

perturbations, and the absolute solidarity of present and past. The purely realistic medals of Andrieux, telling the story of the French Revolution in sketchy scenes, are among the few modern exceptions to this rule. It was all in the line of my earliest associations : what with the old street, the old neighbourhood, the old school, I seem to have been born into the past. History, in any sense worthy of the name, would be impossible without the medallist and the engraver of coins. He fixes beyond dispute the epochs of empire and the dates of events. Without him we should gaze merely in ignorant wonder on that milky way of dead and forgotten kings and princes who flourished in the prime, when every petty potentate, often not much better than a robber chief, struck a coinage for himself. The picture and the statue, perishable as produced only in a single example, are much more at the mercy of time. The coin or the medal in its innumerable issues seldom becomes wholly extinct. The most ancient arts and sciences have their account in it ; it preserves even the quaint symbolism of heraldry in its most enduring form. You must know what you are about, to condense the whole story of a family through the ages into the blazon of a seal. And so must the man who tries to make it out. What of this, for instance, as a technical description of a coat of arms in my old Chaucerian church ? " The centre shield bears the following arms—Quarterly, 1st and 4th, *arg.* a chevron *gu.* between wolves' heads erased *sa.* for Jacob, 2nd and 3rd, *az.* three trussed lambs *arg.* Crest, a lion statant *sa.* The shield on the top of

column on the side nearest to chancel bears the charge—Jacob impaling *arg.*, a chevron between three stags passant attired *or.*"

But the old art tends to make prematurely aged men. Years and years after this period of my life, when I was at Berlin, I bethought me of looking up a German brother craftsman by whose side I had worked at Wyon's. He had become chief engraver to the Prussian mint. Our greetings were cordial, as may be supposed, and, in response to my cheery "Now let's see some of the work," he blinked with modest pride, and turning to a small cabinet not much bigger than a grip-bag, drew out drawer after drawer filled with specimen impressions of medal and coin exquisitely wrought. The better part of his life had gone into it: I thought of Le Sage's "Here lies the soul of the licentiate," and somehow wished his collection had bulked larger to the view. The art is really a branch of sculpture, though its glories escape the eye of all but the connoisseur: in spite of the moralists, it may still be possible to cultivate well doing on too small a scale.

I was "bound" to Benjamin Wyon in old-fashioned indenture of apprenticeship, for seven long years. There were not many of us—one or two engravers of medals, a single engraver of gems. As a highly skilled calling it could hardly have been carried on by the methods of the factory. One of the seal engravers was a German. There was always a German on our staff: we had to import him as being better trained for the work than our native practitioners. The gem engraver, however,

was of our own people. He worked at a wheel which cut the hardest stones in any device, with the aid of minute tools of various sizes, some of them no bigger than a pin's head, and lightly touched with diamond dust and oil. The diamond dust perhaps has always been used as the incisor; the wheel is quite a modern contrivance but a few centuries old. Before that the indefatigable Ancients ground out their designs on the adamantine surfaces of the stone, with a sort of knitting-needle of iron or bronze dipped in the solution. Working in this way, they produced some of the most stupendously beautiful of statuesque compositions in the whole history of art. As these were mostly in use as signet rings, they were limited in size; yet so limited, and rarely exceeding the square half inch, they want only a magnifying glass of microscopic power to reveal groups as varied and as perfect in detail as the fragment of the Niobe or the Laocoon. One might have been a signet ring of Pericles, another a present from Alcibiades to a Persian satrap, or a noble or ignoble dame. Our gem engraver, perhaps as working in this immemorial art, was a particularly quiet man who seemed to think that nothing of importance had happened for three thousand years. It was the very mind of the worker subdued to the spiritual suggestions of the medium in which he worked. He was a conservative of the deepest dye, like most craftsmen of the higher arts. In this respect, however, I am bound to say he had his opposite in our German of the moment, who had come to us as a refugee of the abortive '48 in

his own land. The honest fellow was extremely frank about his own share in the rising, and made no scruple of confessing that, when he saw the soldiery and heard the guns, he laid his own down, and made the best of his way to the ship that brought him to our shores. Here he recovered his breath and his Revolutionary ardour, and now and then stood up for his principles in angry controversy, in which, it is needless to say, no converts were made on either side.

## CHAPTER III

### COLLEGE

WHEN work was over, I went on of nights to the drawing and modelling classes of the recently established Department of Science and Art, then lodged at Marlborough House, and founded by the Prince Consort by way of remedy for our artistic shortcomings as revealed in the Great Exhibition of 1851. The system of teaching was a bad one, as it consisted mostly of mere copying, but it has since been greatly improved. I drew Renascence ornament, from the flat, modelled fruit and flowers, heads and hands from other models of them, without ever making the acquaintance of the living originals, and so after a fashion learned the rudiments of my calling, for which, however, to tell the plain truth about it, I had never known the attraction of a call. From first to last it gave me the fidgets, and I returned the compliment; I was a very poor hand. We were left too much to ourselves to pick it up or leave it alone, as we liked. The Germans wondered how we learned anything at all. "I worked under my father's eye," one of them used to say, "with a 'mind what you're at, young 'un, or you'll get one' —meaning a clout on the head."

The art lessons outside soon grew stiffer, and

made more inroads on my time. In due course I had to leave Marlborough House and the School of Science and Art for Leigh's in Newman Street—one of the two great schools (Cary's hard by being the other) which were preparatory to the Royal Academy. Thackeray's Clive Newcome worked at one or the other of them, I fancy the latter. There it was all high art, with no thought of an application to any kind of manufacture, and with what was supposed to be the rigour of the game. The studio derived its name from the founder, the master or, as he ought rather to be called, the pope. He was a "character," who had quarrelled with the Academicians on their rejection of one of his works. He could afford to sulk, and he sulked; the two things generally go hand in hand. He had means, and the school yielded an income: he said he would never send in another picture, and he kept his word. He shut himself up in the vast gloomy house, with its cavernous recesses running from street to street, and went on painting as though for his life. As fast as the pictures were done, they were hung on his own walls, until the rooms were choked, when the staircase took up the wondrous tale. Pictures, pictures all the way—Holy Families, operatic brigands of Calabria, Roman women at the well, with whole box-loads of properties for the use of the models from the Hatton Garden slum. It was the old outlook in art: the artistic fiat "let there be light" was for a later dispensation. Such things had to be painted in Newman Street: it was not dark enough anywhere else. They were well painted,

after a fashion, with good solid brushwork, and a certain sense of colour, all marred, however, in their effect on the beholder by the stifling sense of indoors.

Leigh took himself seriously. He dressed for his part after the old masters—black velvet dressing-gown and skull cap, to set off white hair and flowing beard; and in all but his excessive girth of waist was a fine figure of a man. He was not "supposed" to give us any teaching: the old housekeeper always reminded us of that when she took our fees. All he did in that way was in the nature of a bonus. He simply provided casts of the great antiques, the Diana, the Milo Venus, the Discobolus—the Niké of Samothrace, I think, had not yet crossed the seas: at any rate she was not there—and so on with most of the other figures of the divine pageant, and left you to choose your acquaintance for yourself, without the benefit of an introduction. You were understood to have learned your rudiments before you went there. Once a night he emerged for a tour of the galleries from a study where he wielded an unresting quill for hours at a time. None of us might know his subject, but I've an idea that he was engaged on a counter-blast to Ruskin, then the heresiarch of art, now its fogey. Oh, the spite of the years! "Pre-Raphaelism," he once said sententiously, "means that art was better five minutes before Raphael was born than five minutes after he died." As a fragment I admit it gives no clue to his opinion, yet I fear that with regard to ideas he was chargeable with the same fault as the

unfortunate travellers of Gadshill, execrated by Falstaff as haters of youth. There is much excuse for it: new things naturally make enemies. Spiritually or otherwise they tend to throw you out of your reckoning. "Open air school! What does it mean?" said another artist of the period. "I'll tell you: a skylight to my roof where the tiles did very well before. It'll be a long time before I see my money back again." The lives of the martyrs should take more cognizance of difficulties of this sort.

He strode forth, ponderous in tread as the Man-Mountain among his pigmies, and with a long clay in his mouth. Sometimes it was a tour of gloomy silence broken only by sniffs. Now and then again a word of praise, or—a thunderbolt. The delicious uncertainty of your luck in it supplied the thrill that was lacking in his work. It was a long time before any notice fell to my share. But one night, I was toiling away at a hand of Michelangelo, on the great scale, only a few sizes under that of Rodin's *main de Dieu*, when he stopped before my easel. It was a hand all ridged with the strenuous lines of toil in work or war. I suppose I had run to excess of zeal in the attempt to do justice to the ridges as they crossed each other in their radiation to all points of the compass. At any rate, he saw in a moment the weakness of its exaggerated strength. "The rails seem all right," he said, "but you might give us a glimpse of the train," and passed on. Here again there was still that want of intelligent direction which is the vice of our method. He did not so much guide his flock

as lie in wait to prod them when they wandered and strayed.

Poynter, now President of the Royal Academy, and Stacy Marks served under Leigh, with many another since known to fame of a kind. One notable studio figure must not be forgotten, Henry S. Leigh, his son, who wrote " Carols of Cockayne " and was shaping well for the laureateship of the *vers de société* when he died. He appeared only at rare intervals in the galleries, and then but as a transient and embarrassed phantom with large and soulful eyes set in a faraway look that betokened a total lack of interest in us and our ways. I forget if Samuel Butler and Forbes Robertson—both only in their first love of a career—were of our school or of Cary's. The former was another Thackeray in his passion for a rebel art of painting that refused to yield to his pursuit, while literature was always dogging his footsteps begging for a smile. I have heard Robertson say that Butler one day timidly put into his hand a copy of the first book from his pen—was it *The Way of All Flesh* ?—and that when he took it home both his father and mother, no mean judges, went into ecstasies of prophecy on the great things in letters that afterwards came to pass.

For good or ill this was the way of studying in our Victorian prime. Our methods were antiquated, we had a good deal of leeway to fetch up, our signal lights emitted but a feeble ray. To that period belongs the rise of the Manchester school, not of politics nor of painting, though there was one of each, but of buyers in the fine arts. In the age

of commercial prosperity by leaps and bounds, the successful cotton spinner had listened too readily to the whisper "have a taste," and he began to buy under the inspiration of his brother traders, the dealers in art. Many a poor work was foisted on him in the belief—honest perhaps on both sides —that it would soon be worth double the money. Few things were quoted under four figures and not a few for five; but when in after years they were brought to the hammer, they reached for the first time their true value at something in the threes and pretty low down at that. The smart of that discovery led to the present craze for old masters, which by the way threatens to run the same disappointing course. The slump in modern art is but a case of the once bit, twice shy of Manchester's rueful discovery that the buyer may, in his own way, find himself in the category of the sold. The moral is one for both sides of the Atlantic: don't listen to the prophets of the counter and the sale room "onless ye know."

Meantime, following my own inclination, which we generally do in the long run, I read voraciously at home, with a strong desire to recover my lost chance of a liberal education. I was a pitiful ignoramus: so I scraped up enough to join the Working Men's College, experimentally for a single term. It was then in Great Ormond Street, in the very house from which the great seal was stolen from Lord Thurlow. At the time of my joining, the College was still in its first youth, and Frederic Denison Maurice, the Principal, had grouped round him, as founders, a number of men

eminent in the church, law, literature or art—among them Ruskin, Ludlow, Furnivall and Hughes. The idea was to bring the best culture of the time down to the workmen, as a check on the Revolutionary tendencies of the time. Maurice had a keen sense of the brotherhood of man, as realized through the brotherhood of the churches and the union of classes : his preaching in Lincoln's Inn Chapel was a new evangel.

The moment you entered the College you were to feel one with the best in self-respect, with no sense of inferiority, except in the luck of opportunity, and this the teaching was to set right. There was to be no idea on either side of patronage, the taint of most of the earlier efforts of the kind. In the Mechanics' Institutes, for instance, the workman's friend seemed to descend on him from the skies, and to be rather in a hurry to get back to them, at closing time. There was in some sort also the tyranny of the curriculum. I hear Maurice now, at one of the College meetings, proclaiming " This is Liberty Hall : everybody's to do as he likes, and thim that won't do it shall be made "—a bull fathered of course upon an Irishman.

Hughes, Chancery barrister in working hours, and author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* in his leisure, stood for muscular Christianity ; and among other things took the boxing class, where he blacked your eye by way of an introduction to the gentle life. The aim was to make the College a true university and seat of learning for the noblest end of progress in the humanities. The

note is preserved in the still flourishing institution in Crowndale Road, now one of the largest of the kind in the kingdom, and in its way unique. No one is invited to go there with a view to bettering his lot in the generally accepted sense of the term. He may do this or he may not, but his business at the College is to better his mind as the organ of his soul, and to get access to the best thought of all the ages as a means to that end. Our newest institutions for working-class teaching, the Polytechnics and the like, are not much more than technical schools where the student hopes mainly to qualify for better wages, and the chance of an escape into capitalism. This is no reproach : it is simply the statement of a difference ; and those who have forced the lower ideal upon the workmen have themselves to thank for it.

Furnivall, the great Shakespearian scholar, and greater human being, who died but the other day, succeeded beyond all the others in putting himself upon a perfect equality with his fellows by the process of levelling up. The men under his sway were his comrades first and last. He led them in long holiday tours abroad, in week-end walks at home where it was hard going both in exercise and high thought. They were a band of happy schoolboys, master and men, and he gave them the ripest fruits of his amazing knowledge of our earlier literature as freely as to the *savans* of the world. His note was plain speaking, simple living, and the hatred of all pretence. Compromise was foreign to his nature. At the annual supper he used invariably, and of malice aforethought, to

scandalize his brother dons by the aggressive advocacy of his pet project, the admission of women to the classes. The speech usually ran like this—I quote purely from memory of course :— "Yes, I'm glad to learn from the report that we are doing so well; but why in the name of common sense must we still refuse to do better by bringing in the girls?" Shrieks from the students: solemn silence at the high table. "What are you afraid of?—that the young fellers may sometimes take to courting the young women? Why that's the best of all culture, in its right time and place."

What he could not get done by the College, he did for himself by starting a sculling club for work-girls, that soon became the pride of the river. On Saturdays and Sundays he took them out and home again, from Hammersmith as a starting-point, with Richmond for the tea and turn, and club supper for the wind up in quarters. The little bearded man with the bright and almost blazing eyes was the uncrowned king of the feast. Supper over, it was a dance, with the College men in partnership. Many of the girls were fine strappers to be sure, with no more suspicion of waist beyond the girth of Nature than the Venus of Milo herself. No harm came of it that I ever heard of, but only much good in the shape of abiding friendships, and I daresay many a match. This was his practical way of doing things. He never moralized on the relations of men and women, rich and poor, but just brought them all together as chums and left the rest to take care of itself. Another scheme

of the same sort was his periodical river treat for the little girls of the slums—still in the club craft. I have sat with him in a boat filled, in utter defiance of the load line, with this human freight, myself perhaps the only nervous creature in the cargo, although I may easily have been the only one able to swim. The doctor for one was not. His aquatic career was dotted with spills, but he always came out of them right side up, if only astride the keel. Yet *if* anything had happened when we had all the children aboard ! I used to ponder, in gloomy uncertainty, my choice of the labours of salvage, between two infants, each cuddling up to me in friendly contest to know which I liked best. Well, nothing did happen, so the only thing worth saying is blessings on the luck of the event.

He had his failings, the hot temper and the hasty word, that once got him into mild trouble with the law in an action for damages for libel or something of the sort. He was constitutionally immoderate, and was apt to scent a humbug in everybody who did not agree with him in everything. Even the Browning Society of his creation was strained almost to breaking point in his quarrels with the family of the poet. He classed them as snobbish in their estimate of their great man. They cared nothing, he used to say, for Browning the writer : all their concern was for the " gentleman " who by the gift that enabled him to hob-nob with dukes, had in Chinese fashion ennobled his ancestors. His sister, Miss Browning, was certainly not free from this weakness : she passed much of her time in covering up the tracks

of a fairly humble origin. Furnivall was merciless in his exposure. He took the trouble to trace the Browning genealogy, and to publish the results in *The Academy* for April 12, 1902, a few years after the poet's death. His researches ended in the discovery of a " Robert," footman and butler (who died in 1746), as " the first known progenitor," and the one that took his fancy most. Robert's son was an innkeeper, the two that came next in the line were clerks in the Bank of England. The poet's grandfather had married a Creole, his mother was of German extraction. That nothing might be wanting to rebuke " the contemptible vanity of successors " he invited subscriptions for a memorial brass to a " Faithful Footman," with the sting in the tail of the inscription in the shape of a quotation from Browning, the poet : " All service ranks the same with God." These disclosures naturally completed the breach between the scandalized relations and the man who, as founder of the Browning Society, had done so much for the fame of their chief.

Charles Kingsley, though not among the founders, had great influence with them, as leader of the earlier Christian Socialists, and author of *Alton Locke.* In spite of its shortcomings, that book will always have its place in the canon of Socialist fiction. If it is no longer a gospel to us, it is still of deep import if judged, as every work should be, in its relation to the thought and feeling of its day. Kingsley was really of the caste of the gentry, and never forgot it, or tried to forget. He held fast to the idea of social grades, and

was as keen for a House of Lords of the right sort as for right masters and right men. A landed aristocracy was in his view " a blessing to the country, as representing all that was noble and permanent in the national character." The existing society was to go on for ever, only high and low were to be brought into harmonious relations of sympathy and mutual service. It was in fact not much more than the Disraelian Young England party, with a strong religious bias. The whole scheme of the College was of that nature. Maurice was Christian first, and certainly no Socialist at any time. None the less was he badly mauled at times by his brethren of the churches. All have to suffer for the good that is in them as well as for the bad : if it were not so, where would be the merit of virtue ? The Bishop of London forbade him to preach in the diocese. Archdeacon Hare called him conceited and irreverent. Dr. Jelf expressed " horror and indignation."

Professor Seeley was on the teaching staff, with Huxley, Tyndall, Dante Rossetti, Madox Brown and Frederic Harrison, to name but a few. One and all, teachers and founders, they were of the pick and pride of England.

As to the students, the teaching flowered in Marks—we never called him anything else—who died but the other day. He began as a printer, and stuck to his trade till he was able to retire in easy circumstances, the fruit of his own exertions. He never had any quarrel with society as such. He worked hard at the Humanities for the pure love of them ; and while a fair reading scholar in

French and German especially, with some knowledge of Spanish, Italian and Latin for his budget of acquirement, he never gave himself airs. He thought and spoke as a working man, none the less so because his English was as pure as Bunyan's. After innumerable benefactions to the College, in service and in hard cash, throughout the course of his life, he was for crowning this part of his work, in his last moments, with a legacy of a thousand pounds. But the accident that caused his death left him too weak to sign the necessary papers. His daughter, however, and her husband, a College man, paid the money without expecting a word of praise for it or receiving more than a line of grateful acknowledgment in an annual report. On both sides there was a careful avoidance of the assumption that "College people" could possibly do anything else. The culture had left its mark.

I did not remain long at the College. I hardly know why—I think because I suffered then, as at other times in my life, from a most plentiful lack of cash. It may also have been because I thought I knew a better way : I did not ; but I had to find that out. So I bobbed about from one thing to another and mastered none. I bought my books for myself at the old second-hand bookshops, then extant in Holywell Street and in Vinegar Yard under the lee of Drury Lane Theatre. "This lot 4d.," or lower sometimes, down to the penny, with here and there a bargain (if one had only known) worth buying at fifty pounds to sell again. The chances of that sort in literature as in *bric-à-brac*

are no longer what they were. To this day I have a *Holy Living* in all but a first edition, bought for a few pence.

I bought, as I have said, without guidance—dead and gone school books, "Wanostrocht's" *Latin Grammar*—I may have blundered with the name, but few, I fancy, will be able to find me out—Clark's Latin texts and translations side by side, a century or so ahead of the Hamiltonian system, and with prefaces to the effect that they were prepared on a plan recommended by Milton and Locke. Sometimes I merely dipped into the Pierian spring, well knowing I could never afford to pay for my drink. "'Ow's business, Joe?" asked a neighbouring dealer of a colleague, as I was once engaged in this way. "Quiet," was the answer; "all readers an' no buyers to-night." I dropped the volume and vanished into the fog to hide my shame. I was like the monkey with the nuts in the fable. I could withdraw nothing from the vase of scholarship because I wanted to grasp all. The College would have disciplined me into a restricted choice, and carried me through into positive acquirement of some sort. I meant well: that is all I can say. I sat up till far into the night, kneeling sometimes at my task to prevent me from going to sleep in my chair. To this period of rather self-conscious virtue belongs an alternative plan to enable me to rise very early in the morning. I hung a stone from the ceiling, and adjusted a lighted candle to the cord, contrived to burn so many hours, sever the string, and bring down the weight as an alarum. This succeeded only too well. The thing came

down with a clatter that roused me and the household together.

Given a certain temperament, and I had it, all this portended book-writing or crime—perhaps both in a way. I made up my mind to be a writer, and to slip the collar of the other art as soon as I could.

## CHAPTER IV

### LITTLE GRUB STREET

THE years passed; I was out of my apprenticeship and a full-fledged worker in the craft I was beginning to abhor. I set up for myself with parental aid, and with varied fortunes, mostly bad. But more years had to pass, till about my six and twentieth, before my chance came. I was anxious not to hurt my father's feelings by throwing myself once more on his hands, without any present chance of earning a living. I had ventured to sound him as to the possibility of a real education for the Bar, but of course, and I think I may say luckily, I found him cold. It would have meant more years of dependence with scant opportunities at the end of them. If I could make the change to another calling without his aid, or, till it was done, without his knowledge, I might find him more tractable or more resigned. But how manage it? A regular pursuit generally implies the fixity of the caste system: you tend to that by the force of circumstances. I had to think of the way in which his cold and reserved nature had risen almost into ecstasy in my prospects of a career as they had shaped themselves in his mind. In particular I remember one Sunday afternoon's walk in the Green Park when

he had, as it were, glowed with vision as he saw me another Chief Engraver, perhaps, to the Mint. Buckingham Palace in the background seemed to glow with him under the evening sun, benignantly as though with the promise of another "trusty and well beloved" on the part of its august inmate, and all for me.

The long-desired opening came unsought at last, as such things usually do. There was a scheme afoot for a Working Class Exhibition, as between England and France, and through the good offices of a friend at Wyon's, another rolling stone like myself, I was offered the post of secretary at two pounds a week. I was to go over to Paris, entrancing prospect! and invite the French workmen to co-operate with their English brethren in showing what they could achieve on their own account without the assistance of the capitalist.

Behold me then in Paris with hardly a word of French to my name, a matter one had almost forgotten on both sides. I could read it without much difficulty, for I had not ignored the subject in my scheme of self-education, but the rest was still to seek. Luckily it was not exactly so bad as that with German. I had exchanged lessons with one of my foreign mates in the workshop, and could rattle away in pigeon German wholly innocent of grammar, almost as easily as in my own tongue. And by good hap this served. The secretary of the French committee spoke German quite well, and expounded me to his colleagues in a way that served.

What a new world Paris was, in all the well-

known stages of the first experience of foreign travel. I had never before left England, hardly left London and its neighbourhood. Of course, the first impression it gave me was that foreigners were deliberately "contrary" in their marked tendency to differ from our way of doing things. Everybody knew that brewers' drays should be broad, but not long. Here they were narrow and so long that they could hardly turn a corner. This was carried out in everything one saw—manners, institutions, social life; and since England was manifestly just so, it seemed a pity to make wilful departures from it. I was a raw hand.

This state of mind was shared by "my Committee." In our exquisite ignorance of the state of parties in France we could think of nothing better than to ask for Imperial patronage. It was given only too readily, at the instance of M. Émile Ollivier, then in office and in high favour at Court, as a deserter from the Opposition led by Jules Favre and M. Thiers. This was bad enough as a beginning on our part, but when we went straight from him, in all innocence, to the real leaders of the workmen who detested both the minister and his master, we perpetrated a very pig upon bacon of blunder and confusion. The workmen could not refuse to co-operate with their French enemies, since the invitation came from their English friends, yet how could they play second fiddle to the Imperial Government. They did it all the same, for our sakes. Perhaps the deplorable French of our circular of invitation melted their

hearts. The whole thing must have been a peculiarly sore trial for the most influential men of the popular party, the two Reclus, Élisée the great geographer and Élie his brother and colleague in science.

It was a great thing to be of their intimacy, though I was not in a position to enjoy the full advantage of it. They lived in the Batignolles, a sort of Parisian Camden Town. Such freedom from all pretence is not at all uncommon with men of the first importance in France. At a later period I used as a journalist to call on Jules Simon, ex-President of the Council, in his fifth floor suite in the *Place de la Madeleine*. I have dined with Yves Guyot, an ex-minister, in a modest third floor over the water and in a patriarchal setting of family and friends. Degas the painter used to live like a simple *bourgeois*. Élisée Reclus was then laying the foundations of his monumental work *The Earth*, with many a year to wait for pecuniary results. He was emphatically a man who lived by and for ideas. He had married a lady of colour, quadroon perhaps or octoroon, wisely indifferent to the fact that such unions were not common among the white races. She was of great refinement both in manners and in her cast of mind. I had to sit dumb in their *salon* partly through timidity, mainly by reason of my want of their language—and in a manner deaf, for the same reason. But I could use my eyes ; and there, as I afterwards came to know, I was in touch with the little band who were quietly engineering the fall of the second Empire, and the revenge of the

democracy for the *coup d'état*. It was a great experience—a revolution in the making, quiet walks and talks between bloused workmen and professors, the frequent woman in the case, and all animated by a common purpose and pursuing it with a relentless single-mindedness common to the French character. There was even a certain pedantry in their devotion. For them Napoleon III was no emperor: he was Monsieur Bonaparte, and the Empress was but Madame his wife. They never paused or slackened till they had sent both packing, after Sedan. That done, the Reclus, under the same dominion of their fixed idea—the people as rulers and masters of themselves without appeal—engineered the *Commune* against the Republic of the *bourgeoisie*. We know what happened after that—Élisée caught, and saved only by the appeal of the whole world of science, when he stood almost under the rifles of the firing party.

The elder, Élie, was the perfect thing in fanaticism, cold and self-contained. He might have sat for the portrait of a Covenanter. Spiritually he reminded me of those animals whose jaws lock in what they bite. Heredity may have had something to do with it: the father was a Swiss pastor of the Calvinistic type. The pair, I imagine, had long since parted with their Christianity to put philosophic Anarchy in its place. With old Blanqui, another notable figure of the time, they were for *ni Dieu, ni maître*, the absolute freedom of the individual to walk by his own light, with nothing but his conscience for guide and law. Hence their

share in the rising of the *Commune*. It was no movement for license for its own sake. On the contrary, it was rooted in the old idea that you had but to give man perfect liberty, to make him the nearest approach to an angel we are ever likely to see. Their aim was the irreducible minimum of authority, and they hoped to find it in the *commune* as the atomic unit of administration. The smaller the unit, the nearer to perfection: Paris was a big *commune*, but that was an accident of the situation. For the ideal, imagine a village with, say, a hundred inhabitants. The hundred were to be omnipotent within their own bounds, and with a sort of secretarial agent carrying on their will, but this only by way of friendly suggestion. For the will, even of a majority of ninety-nine, was not binding on the hundredth man: he might stand out, for his convictions or for his whim. It was good going in metaphysics, yet hundreds of thousands spilled their souls for it when the time came. There are some six and thirty thousand *communes* in France: had all gone well in Paris, there would have been as many independent states. If a single one objected to railways, it might say "thus far shalt thou go and no farther" to the longest line. This was the pure absolute of doctrine, as meekness, self-sacrifice, and turning the other cheek was the absolute of Christianity; but there were compromises for the weakness of human nature—an imperious necessity under which, as we know, a certain servant of the high priest had to lose an ear. Élisée, with all his natural kindness of heart, could not avoid the compromise of revolution.

" Never has great progress, special or general, been made by simple specific evolution : it has always been made by a revolution." He signed a declaration to that effect with Kropotkine and many more. He did so probably as a geographer : Zola may have been thinking of him when he put this in the mouth of one of his characters : " I was forced to make a place for the volcano, the abrupt cataclysm, the sudden eruption, which has marked each geologic phase, each historic period." Yet, if there had been cursing in Élisée, he could have cursed the bomb and the bomb-throwers : " Anarchy is the *summum* of humane theories : whoso calls himself an Anarchist should be gentle and good."

I came most in contact with Élie because his English was better. The only soft spot in him was his love of literature : he usually carried a volume of Hugo in his pocket, perhaps as the best expression of the current revolt for freedom, in that domain. Yet, inconsistently enough, he was disposed, as a Frenchman, to make a reservation here in favour of order and law. Our easy-going independence of these things in English letters was hateful to him. " The negroid dialects," he once remarked to me in his icy way, " have the same simplicity of structure." He looked on Carlyle as a sort of jelly fish of authorship—amorphous, as he was wont to put it, by way of hoisting the engineer with his own *pétard*. He was a poor companion, concentrated, silent, cold, but there were gleams as of banked fire in his eyes that boded mischief, and no doubt accounted for a

deformity of one hand, resulting, I believe, from a sabre stroke during the *coup d'état*. I told him I should like to be a writer: "It is quite enough," he said, "to be a man." I drew a fancy portrait of him in John Street as Azrael. He was the most implacable person of principle I have ever met, machine made, to ends and uses of machinery, in every fibre of his being.

We held our Anglo-French Working Class Exhibition, at Sydenham, in due course, and I had to return to England with my new occupation gone. To go back to the old one was impossible: I had lifted the curtain on a corner of life. For good or ill, I was going to try my luck in writing for the Press.

I had ten pounds: I determined to make it last as long as I could, and meantime, to write, write, write. So I took a lodging in a sort of Little Grub Street—in all but the name—running out of the Gray's Inn Road, and with a garret floor proper to the occasion. "May our endeavours to please be crowned with success"—that was the humour of it. I was so eager for this that I never thought of pleasing myself: so it was a sort of double event of misapplied energy. I turned out stories, essays, these preferred, skits, sketches, anything that came into my mind, as distinct from coming out of it, and, of course, I had nothing but failures to my credit. My little trading ventures came back without having found a market, or reported themselves total losses by simply keeping silent as to their fate. Once I thought the luck had turned with a conditional acceptance of a desperate

article on clocks and watches. It was worked up from "the usual sources of information" in the public libraries, and offered to the editor of *The Clerkenwell News*, then in its modest beginnings as a mere trade organ, with a good advertising connection of parochial extent. It came out, in fitful instalments, almost repeating the count of the weeks it had taken me to write. I got nothing for it, and by arrangement: there lay the sting. "We don't pay for this sort of thing," said the editor genially, and he seemed to say with the man in Dickens: "you are very young, sir," as he looked me in the face. And I did get something after all—print! Delicious intoxicant! beyond poppy and mandragora as medicine for the sleep sweetened by dreams of fame.

Then came the awakening: *The Clerkenwell News* wanted no more; the other periodicals maintained their steady demand for peace and quietness; the ten pounds had nearly melted away. I stretched myself full length on the floor, and thought I could have made a better world.

I had but one confidant in all this time of trial: my old associate at Wyon's who had started the scheme of the Anglo-French Working Class Exhibition. He was an erratic creature, with a streak of genius in his composition that might have matured into achievement, but for want of ballast. How we rambled the streets together and talked of all things wise and foolish since we talked of our hopes. Fine chances were actually reserved for him, but not yet. It was one day to be his luck to capture *The Times*, then a paper almost

hymned by our ruling class as a blessing from above. The occasion was a letter, a column long, on the franchise, from the pen of a Conservative working man. It was the sensation of the hour. The great agitation for Reform was well afoot with John Bright as its prophet, and the workmen as the class clamouring for the vote : the Hyde Park Railings were to fall in the struggle, though as yet they were safe. The writer of the letter came as a sort of Providential deserter to the enemy. It was signed "Robert Coningsby," his real name, and it brought with it a flavour of the Disraelian ideals, the sons of toil ranged under the aristocracy as their natural leaders. He had naturally the trick of the pen. I remember one striking passage : "We will have no king but Cæsar." He had moreover, benefited by the educational patronage of Mr. Martin, the founder of the long historic law suit, Martin *v.* Mackonochie, or Low Church *v.* High. Democrat as he was by his humble birth and calling, he was quite an aristocrat in his impatience of a superior. He was determined to arrive, and he took this as the nearest way. And arrive he did after a fashion : within a few years of that time he was a war correspondent on the staff of *The Times*, whose editor had kept his eye on him ever since the famous letter. It was a tremendous rise for one who had started as a mechanic in a paper cap, in our lower premises at Wyon's where they struck the medals at huge presses, after roasting them red hot over roaring fires between stage and stage of the process. He had the utmost contempt for the political leaders

of his own class, with whom he had coquetted for an opening in their ranks only to find them wedged tight to keep him out—a miniature Disraeli in fact. At one time, fired by the success of his Anglo-French Exhibition, he invented for himself a sort of mission to the United States, actually had an audience of the President, and I believe sat at meat with him at the White House. I remember a triumphant letter from him on the theme of "how's this for high."

I fancy it was in his blood: Hardy has told us that, if you want really all that is left of many of the oldest families, you must look for them among the humblest of the people. It was so in his case: a pure artisan in manners and customs, there was yet "a something about him," backed by a family tradition of origins. There was distinction in his cast of feature—the Roman beak, the full eye and short upper lip; and with it a good manner when he cared to put it on. Add to this an easy possession of his h's, a feat, in the circumstances of his upbringing. He sang well, and he could throw himself into a love ballad with a conviction hard to withstand. As an offset, he loved beer, as he used to say because there were no bones in it, drank it turn and turn with a mate out of the same pewter, and was a great trencherman at every kind of feasting within his reach. In spite of all, a captivating companion for man or woman, especially the latter, a Lassalle in shirt-sleeves. His conceit of himself was colossal; his temper uncontrollable; he would ruin the best chances with a hasty word.

In one of our walks, when I was downcast with the contemplation of the last shot in the locker of my hoard, we saw a contents bill of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, then under the editorship of Frederic Greenwood. It claimed our attention for " A Night in a Workhouse—by an Amateur Casual." It was appetizing: the *Gazette* was the smartest thing in journalism, written by gentlemen for gentlemen, on the plan sketched in jest by Thackeray in one of his happy excursions of satirical fancy. Greenwood had taken the hint and turned it into the living reality of a new evening paper.

His brother James was the Amateur Casual; and the pair had carefully worked out their scheme of a descent by a dandy into the social shades. The Amateur took care to tell us that he had been driven down in his editor's brougham, and in slum toggery, to the purlieus of the workhouse, and there dropped to see how it felt to be an outcast. The rest was business of the usual sort—dainty disgust of the associations, the food, and above all of the compulsory bath. The instalments sold as fast as they could be printed: it was the sensation of the day. We bought our paper, revelled in it over our pipes, and were separating after a midnight sitting when my friend started a happy thought. Dives had gone to have a look at Lazarus; why should not Lazarus return the compliment, in *The Evening Star*, the organ of the other side? I rose to it; and we agreed that we should each try it on his own account, and send in the article that seemed to shape best.

We parted on that; and next day I set to work.

It wrote itself in a manner: I was so taken with the idea. The machinery was of the simplest; it took the form of "A Night in Belgrave Square—by a Costermonger." In the details, of course, I claimed the full benefit of all the chartered liberties of farce. The coster was smuggled into the fine house as a guest, by a friend engaged as an extra hand for the service of a great dinner. He borrowed his uniform for the occasion, drove to the rendezvous in his barrow, left in a bye-street, passed muster because the host and hostess, having separate lists as the result of a tiff, were each under the impression that he came on the other's invitation. For him the gathering was but one long torment of pity for a fallen state of social enjoyment, "feller creeturs" with no genuine interest in each other, and "so cold like they seemed to give me the spasms." He escaped from it to bread and cheese and an onion, and registered a vow of "never again."

As soon as it was done, I rushed off with it to our rendezvous, and threw it at my chum for a catch.

"There's mine: where's yours?"

"Haven't begun it yet: met a little party: you know."

"I say! look alive about it, or we shall miss our chance."

"Why won't yours do? Let's see." He glanced over it, handed it back to me: "That's all right; we'll walk down and drop it in the box."

Four-and-twenty hours later and London was in a rash of a new poster—this time of *The Evening*

*Star*—"A Night in Belgrave Square—by a Costermonger," in big capitals, and with the bill all to itself. I hurried off to show it to him, but he was before me of course with his own copy. We discussed plans for new articles. I was for falling back on rejected contributions. "Nothing of that sort," he said; "why go further afield? Go on with the Costermonger, and make him a character—the Coster here, there and everywhere in a survey of the whole scheme of things. What have you and I been talking about all this time? And you the worst, with your everlasting sense of contrasts between high and low, wise and simple, rich and poor." He was right: the one thing I had never thought of writing about was the thing that was nearest to my heart. The shyness of the pen is sometimes the most invincible of all. He had helped me to find myself.

And so to bed, but not to sleep for the throb of thoughts. The Press had claimed me for its own.

## CHAPTER V

### FLEET STREET

AT the end of the week the cashier handed me two guineas with the expression of a hope that it might only be the beginning of our relations. It was the first wage for work of this kind I had ever touched, and, as such, it had a most beneficial effect on my spirits. It seemed to lift me at a bound out of the amateur class. The compliments of my new patrons must be sincere, for they had backed their opinions with their money. My friend and I cracked a bottle over it; and with this and other rejoicings the gold was soon reduced to small change.

Then came an introduction to the staff. Justin McCarthy sent for me, and I was presented in due form as one who was going to be " one of us." I felt like the initiate of a priesthood. These were *writers;* and in my callow state of mind the people who regularly got into print had suffered the mystic change into something that was almost sacramental.

Their chief was well calculated to inspire this feeling with the charm of his manner. As I have said of him elsewhere, " Pleased with thyself whom everyone can please," might have been written of Justin McCarthy. It would, however, have to be

understood in its best sense. There was nothing of the self-satisfaction of vanity in his inexhaustible amiability. It sprang from a genuine charity, a genuine joy in being and in doing, as good things.

As a writer he had incomparable ease; and for once, though by way of exception, this made easy reading for others. The maxim on which he consistently acted in all the labours of composition was that a man need never seek to do more than his level best. Something of his essentially Celtic temperament perhaps went into this theory. Innumerable columns of print, and pages as the leaves of Vallombrosa, did not seem to leave a wrinkle on his brow, or to add or take a tint from the pure white and red of his complexion. If he had to lecture, he went straight to his work without a thought about it except in the general scheme. His solicitude never extended to the form, and still less, if possible, to the expression. He spoke out of a full mind and left all the rest to take care of itself.

It was the same later on with his speeches in the House. With a better voice, he would have left his mark as an orator. As it was he too often seemed to be speaking "to his own beard." But the substance of what he said was admirable within the limits of excellence which Nature and choice had assigned to him. Ease was the principle of his literary being. His prodigious memory was stored with cases in point from two or three literatures, from which he could quote by chapter and verse. He quoted freely, because he enjoyed freely: his

reading had manifestly agreed with him. He had taken his authors, as he took men of flesh and blood, as good fellows whose best things, whether they told for or against him, were infinitely interesting as products of human power. Geniality was his note. He seemed to write with the softest of swan quills dipped in a fluid of milk and honey, without an effort, without a pang, till the task was done. He instinctively avoided all those parts of his subject that might give himself, or his readers, a headache. It was all picture, suggestion, felicity of phrase. In this way he produced his prodigious output of journalism and of magazine literature. The mere titles of his topics would tax the industry of a German compiler. He seemed to have written on everything that was stirring in his time—politics, literature, philosophy, manners.

His very limitations were means to an end: nature was fashioning the author of *A History of Our Own Times*. "One is helped in writing history," he said, "by being a novelist." That really remarkable work was in a new style of what may be called middle history—the glittering bird's-view of the candidatures for immortality in the history to come. It was not profound; it was not learned; it was not problem in politics or morals; it was a genial, tolerant survey of an epoch, written without a trace of party, for the benefit of those who sometimes have to read as they run; and such are the bulk of mankind. It was commissioned by one publishing house, and then returned—on payment of a handsome compensation—in a cold fit of alarm as to the effect, on the book market, of his

championship in Parliament of Home Rule. With a smile and a shrug, he at once offered it to another house, and it made the tour of the English-speaking world. The publisher of little faith lost no time in going into sackcloth and ashes, but the mischief was done.

The success of the original issue was immediate and prodigious. The author's royalties in this country realized sums that were only to be written in five figures. If there had been copyright in the United States at the time of its publication, he might have retired on a competence from this one production alone. But, alas! political life had claimed him for its own; and the cause of Ireland was the altar on which he laid the sacrifice of his fortune. As he went deeper and deeper into politics he had, of course, less and less time for the labours of the desk. His income fell off, and all possibility of saving was brought to an end by the direful catastrophe of the Irish Exhibition. He had guaranteed that ill-starred undertaking, which had Olympia for the scene of its failure, and he was one of the few of his associates whose position made them profitable game for the creditor. He was bled, and bled, and bled again by process of law, and as fast as the veins were replenished by his industry they were drained once more.

But all this was yet to be when I joined in the halcyon days. On Saturdays we often supped at his house in Kennington, then still touched with rural charm. These entertainments were to my limited experience as feasts of the gods. William Black was of the company, when he was not away

on correspondence during the Prusso-Austrian war of 1856. Black was soon to try his hand at the novel. His first attempt, I believe, in that form was called *Love or Marriage*, prudently suppressed afterwards when his works were collected for the canon. It was among the first of the risky stories, the " or " turning on the supposition that the two states might be deadly opposites, and that you had to make your choice. It came into the office for review ; and the task fell to the lot of Cooper, then sub-editor, and afterwards editor of *The Scotsman*. " Governor," he said to the chief, " I've done my best for it ; but—oh ! " McCarthy himself was then in the running for the prizes of fiction. Most of his work in that line, as in others, was bright and optimistic, a tender love story ending with wedding bells, and interspersed with sketches of life as it is lived on the public scene, in foreign travel, or in the social round, all taken at its face value. If there was a touch of envy anywhere, it was only in the breast of his beautiful and charming wife. She never could get quite used to Black's success in subsequent works, especially in *A Daughter of Heth* that started him on the triumphs of his career. For her, " Justin " had struck the note, and there could not possibly be any departure from it, consistently with what were then regarded as the sanctities of the home. She was the hostess at our Saturday suppers, with no rival of her own sex, and only with adorers of ours.

We saw something of the children—Justin Huntly in the knickerbocker stage, the daughter Charlotte a callow little thing in frocks and sashes,

with something of the wondering look of one of Raffael's cherubs making a first acquaintance with a planet of sorts. These children lived the life of their parents to the full. When still early in their teens, if not before, they had seen most of the plays and operas, travelled here, there and everywhere on the Continent, and ransacked their father's library at will. Later on, Justin Huntly, if not in knickerbockers, still without a hair on his chin, was once met at his father's door alighting from a hansom, with a pile of Balzacs for his luggage. He was going to review the master from start to finish, by way of trying his luck with it in one of the magazines.

Russell of Liverpool, Sir Edward now if you please, was another of our band. He then wrote the Parliamentary leader for *The Star*, in the Press gallery of the House—paragraph by paragraph as he distilled the whole moral of the distracting business in the course of the debate. His private and personal solace in literature was the drama, as associated with the genius and fortunes of Henry Irving. He did for Irving what he did for the debates, discovered his true significance, and gave him his place in the critical estimates of the time, lectured on him, and every now and then produced a solid and thoughtful pamphlet in which he chronicled the growth of his powers.

Among others destined to future distinction, we had Wilson, a young Irishman from Cork—Alphabet Wilson we used to call him by reason of the number of letters, E. D. J., to his name. He was then a writer of leaders for *The Star*, and an

ardent Nationalist, so ardent that McCarthy could hardly drive him without the curb. Afterwards he became chief leader writer for *The Times*, and took an active part in the campaign against Home Rule that bore the title of *Parnellism and Crime*. The blood-curdling revelations under that heading were not by his hand: he only drove the moral of them home in the leader columns. He was altogether an extraordinary person. He was widely and deeply read in the classics and in modern tongues, and he had a mind that could pick up the pin of anecdote, or lift the weight of a whole thesis in politics, philosophy or history. He wrote impeccable prose, at the pace of something driven by steam, rarely blotted a line, and in that, as in all other respects, was the ideal journalist in the perfection of his powers. I include in the estimate a thorough conviction in his abandonment of the Radical cause. He did not turn his coat: he changed it. The new faith was as much a matter of conscience, and say also of feeling, with him as the old. I can testify to that, for it was the subject of many a hot dispute between us which our mutual friendship never allowed to degenerate into a quarrel. I doubted his judgment, I never had cause to doubt his honesty. I own to a partiality in my estimate, for all that: he was ever the soul of friendship with me. He lived on to fight the battle of his paper to its disastrous close, and finally retired on a liberal allowance, but not to his hoped-for rest in the evening of life. He had projected an important political work, for the occupation of his leisure, but suddenly his great powers

seemed to fail him with a snap, and after that came labour and sorrow before they were due by his count of years. *The Times* gave him an obituary column: the world at large seemed hardly aware of his loss. It was the system of anonymity at its worst. For the better part of half a century his pen had influenced, for good or ill, the policy of the empire, but his work bore no signature, and only the newspaper offices, and the Parliament men, could put a name to it. For multitudinous readers in every quarter of the globe, he was hardly so much as a great unknown, since this implies at least the knowledge that there is a concrete something to ignore. In France, such a man might easily have aspired to ministerial honours, or to an embassy, and he could not possibly have failed of his Officer's Cross. As it was, the very ruck of the music-hall stage would have eclipsed him easily in notoriety, while the cruel conditions under which he wrote denied him fame.

I now settled down to my Costermonger articles, carrying the character here, there and everywhere in a comprehensive glance at the life of his betters. He found his way into the Strangers' Gallery for a night in Parliament, then in the turmoil of the new Reform debates. He even drew up a Reform Bill of his own. He attended the great Trades' Demonstration of 1866 when some sixty thousand working men marched in perfect order through the West End ironically saluting the Tory clubs as they passed. He went to the Derby; he dined with the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House; he ran over to Calais for a look at the French, in a

walking tour to the Belgian frontier. He professed to know all about the table talk at one of the Greenwich whitebait dinners of the Cabinet, even then in the period of their decline. He said his say on the horrors of war during the struggle between Austria and Prussia, on the Indian famine, and what not. The articles were afterwards republished in book form, as *Mr. Sprouts, His Opinions*, with a grateful dedication to Robert Coningsby as the only begetter. The little volume had its day, and then deservedly sank into oblivion. It was immature to the last degree, but it is still of interest to the writer as a record of the best he could do at that time in the criticism of life.

A further interest lies in the fact that it was in the Bohemian note, at a time when the Bohemia of the Press was beginning to be a thing of the past. The institution was just kept going by a few convivial clubs all based on the idea that the self-respecting writer was bound to be a bit of a wastrel in his private hours. With most, this was no more than lip service to a social cult in its dotage, and it was consistent with the decorum of the home and wholesome family life. One club held its meetings in the Gothic chamber over the gateway of the old military monastery of St. John of Jerusalem, in Clerkenwell. Many actors were of the membership, and one of the sights for visitors was Marston, a fashionable ghost in *Hamlet*, smoking his midnight pipe after playing in the piece with Phelps at Sadler's Wells. Like Mrs. Siddons before him, he ordered his very refreshments in a sepulchral tone. Black once violated

the club rule of secrecy in a fancy sketch of harmless pleasantries. There was a Vagrants' Club, with its profession of faith in a club song of which a precious fragment still remains in my memory :—

I'm a vagrant,
Thou'rt a vagrant,
Vagrants too are he and she :
We are vagrants,
Ye are vagrants,
And where are they as wouldn't be ?
Three groans for them—as wouldn't be.

However, we contrived to believe that we believed every word of it, till the last note of the chorus had died away.

There was an Arundel Club for the theatrical critics, which slowly opened one eye at about midnight, and became wide awake an hour or so later when all the copy was in the printer's hands. There was a Circle Club, chiefly for Academy students, with Waterlow Ouless and Buckman among its members. And there was, of course, the Savage Club, which would need a whole book to itself, if it did not already possess it in the volume from the pen of Mr. Aaron Watson.

Most of them merely took Bohemianism as a diversion : the few who still took it seriously were much to be pitied, for they suffered for their faith. Such a Bohemian, dyed in the wool, I remember going to see in the limbo of one of the sponging houses to which our old comedy owed so much. It was in Cursitor Street. I am glad I did not neglect my opportunity, for shortly after they all died the death, as the effect, direct or indirect, of

the Act of Parliament abolishing imprisonment for debt. Such imprisonment goes on all the same, with a difference, and that is quite enough for a mealy-mouthed generation. Formerly you were imprisoned for not paying your creditor: now you suffer for not obeying the Court that orders you to pay him. The Court determines the conditions of settlement according to its view of your means: your failure to comply with its order is "contempt." Holloway Prison still swarms with debtors, but they are there under another name, as wanton and wilful contemners of the law. It must make all the difference to them in adding to the enormity of their sense of guilt. The sponging house was a relic of the old class legislation with its thousand and one discriminations between common people and their betters. If you had absolutely nothing, you went into the jail for debtors, as long as they cared to pay for keeping you there; if you could pay your way for awhile, you had the option of a sort of private lodging-house where you might receive your friends, and try to settle matters before final committal to prison. The lodging-house keeper, as a bailiff, was also your jailer, responsible for your safe custody. You boarded with him, and ate, drank and smoked your full, all at famine prices.

My friend was a well-known artist of the humbler sort. He illustrated the published music-hall songs of the day, with portraits of the singers in their habit as they lived in the glare of the footlights. One evening he missed the weekly meeting of The Vagrants, and the dismal news went round that

he had been taken to Cursitor Street. The Club decreed a visit of sympathy, and next day I was of the deputation. Locks, bolts and bars flew asunder to admit us, and then shot back again to make us sharers of his captivity till we took our leave. Two or three days' confinement, without exercise, and almost without light and air, had yellowed him to the prison colour. Much of the dirt of his environment was supplied gratis by the management, but his foul dressing-gown was, I believe, a luxury at charges. He essayed a smile on our entry, and croaked, "I'm a vagrant, thou'rt a vagrant," to show that his spirit was unbroken, but somehow it seemed to come from the wrong side of his mouth.

On another occasion I wished our chairman at a certain club a cordial 'good night,' after a delightful evening. Twelve hours or so later I had unexpectedly to wish him 'good morning' in the less bright clime of Whitecross Street prison for debt. He had just been arrested: I was there only as a visitor in quest of material for an article on the approaching demolition of the jail. It was an awkward moment. "You here!" came simultaneously from both of us. "Yes, I'm looking round," I said, not knowing how to better it on the spur of the moment. He reddened to the roots of his hair, and turned away.

Yes, Bohemia was dying—and everywhere. Mürger even had to make it but a phase in the life of his merry men on their way to a career. Who killed its Cock Robin in our colder clime? Some attribute the catastrophe to the Time spirit,

others to suburban trains. One famous club in London, long devoted to the cult, but now a model of all the virtues, still keeps a chartered libertine of Bohemia on its list of members, as a sort of pet. He, and he alone, may break every rule of the institution at his pleasure, but woe to anybody else who breaks so much as a single one. There is a sort of vanity in the culture of all such relics of a shady past. The revivalists of two American cities, I remember, once contended for the honour of having brought the very worst of sinners "within the fold." The Lake City began it by injudicious boasts of a certain wicked man in Chicago as the wickedest man in America. The commercial capital immediately set up an ex-wicked man of New York as holding the record for the planet. Other cities joined to make it a sort of four-handed game, and the respective champions entered into the fray with becoming spirit. The Chicago specimen owned to wife-beating as a diversion: the New York one immediately trumped with having been the death of his mother, and won the trick and the rubber.

One of the last Bohemians of my acquaintance on the Press was a young Scotsman who had been a comrade of Black in Glasgow, when London was merely an aspiration for both. With characteristic rashness he undertook to make the first venture, and to examine and report. He came and soon thought himself able to assure his friend that it was a safe thing. He was premature, but he yearned for company, and he had actually earned a trifle by penny dreadfuls that kept him going for

a time. Black accordingly started but not, of course, with any destinies of that kind in view. The other was at the railway station to meet him, and carried him off to his own dingy lodging, in old Sam Johnson's Bolt Court, for refreshment. After a high tea, the host proposed making a night of it to celebrate the occasion. Black coldly declined, and drawing a short story from his wallet sat down to finish it for the night's post. Their meeting was in fact but a parting of the ways. The host finally sank into the humblest offices of the Press, with the infirmary for his last stage. I make no imputation of sudden desertion or neglect on Black's part; the other, I fear, became simply impossible in the long run. His visitor was soon on the flowing tide of an engagement and paying work.

Even Sala, prince of Bohemians, lived to mend his ways. He began as a primeval "Savage," he ended at the Reform Club, immaculate in the smartness of the day. He was of great service to that institution as an acknowledged authority on good eating and drinking. Wine lists had no secret for him, and he was such a judge of cookery that when the club wanted a new *chef* he was sent to Paris in solemn mission to find the right man. We were both at the dinner given to Dickens, on his second visit to the States to "make it up" for *American Notes*. It was a gathering of famous persons of the time, and it filled the great hall at the Freemasons' Tavern to the full. Bulwer was in the chair, and for other figures, now seen as in a dream, we had Maclise the painter, Henry

Thompson the famous surgeon, Jacob Omnium the indefatigable writer of letters to *The Times* on every topic under the sun, to say nothing of hundreds that have faded from memory as nearly all have faded from life. Praise of the guest of the evening was of course on every tongue, but when it came to the item of his services to the public as the founder of *Household Words*, and as a contributor of the best to its pages, Sala, who had been perfectly abstemious and alert during the evening, as though awaiting the honourable mention of his own name, began to dissent with an ominous growl. It was understood to signify that the best in that periodical was from his own pen. He had certainly done well for it, with many an article of marked brilliancy and charm. But the growl was disconcerting for all that, especially as it grew deeper and deeper till it seemed to betoken some peculiarly alarming escape from the Zoo. Friendly keepers, however, were happily at hand, to persuade him to compound the matter by an occasional groan.

For all that he was a notable figure of the day. The hour and the man came together when the Lawsons resolved on the great venture of a daily newspaper at a penny. Its appeal was naturally to the million, and the million had wants and tastes of its own. Sala found the note—omniscience, set off with abundant illustration, and inexhaustible fertility of quip and crank. He became the literary parent of all the young lions of *The Daily Telegraph*, who succeeded each other in unbroken line until they had made the fortune of

its discerning owner. The new journalism of that epoch had come to town. A newer now reigns in *The Daily Mail*, but *The Telegraph* has known how to change with the circumstances, without once failing to find the formula for success. It has tapped new sources as a sort of family paper *in excelsis* for the comfortable classes. Their law of life is the avoidance of shock either to mind or body, and " something to read " that keeps them at once calm and amused, like Buddhas with a sense of a joke in public affairs. How things change, and, notoriously, how, in their essence, they are ever the same.

About this time I settled myself in chambers as being more in keeping with the claims of my new life. I took two sky parlours in Lincoln's Inn Fields, another bit of old London in harmony with all my most pleasurable associations, and I put my name on the door. I came and went as I pleased, with no troublesome formality of knock or ring : and at night time I had the roomy, gloomy old building all to myself, with the exception of the housekeeper in the basement—ancient of days like the rest. It was on the same side as the chambers of the unfortunate Mr. Tulkinghorn ; and his fate somehow gave it an added charm. One could never tell what might not be happening to some successor of his in the same set, as one sat in the small hours of the morning, browsing on *Bleak House*, or studying the dramatists of the Restoration in their *habitat*. My father now knew of the change in my mode of life, and accepted it, without giving it his formal sanction. He treated all my other activities

in the same way, never once, so far as I know, saw article or book of my doing, and certainly never alluded to either in any shape or way. But he was a good father still, and we remained the best of friends, while keeping this open secret of silence between us to the end of his days.

## CHAPTER VI

### PARIS AGAIN

MY next commission for the paper was altogether to my liking—Paris for the exhibition of 1867. It was the most impressive of all the exhibitions in France, perhaps also in the whole world. Others had larger acreage; and I am especially not unaware of the claims of Chicago both in that and in beauty. But this one synchronized with world-shaking events. The empire, while still making a brave show of it, was really worm-eaten at the core. The persistent pounding of the opposition had at last told on the stability of the throne. The "crowning of the edifice" with liberal institutions was already marked for failure. Without, there was the terrible menace of the United States as the champion of Mexico. The Civil War was over, but the land swarmed with hardy veterans ready to back the demand for the withdrawal of the French garrison. Prussia had succeeded France as the friend in need of Italian independence, and France herself had to become a party to the Austrian cession of Venetia, doubly humiliating because Bismarck had openly rejected her claim to territorial compensation. In one hemisphere or the other, France was threatened by great powers, the coming

" Germany " and the restored Union in full stride. The States were the first to prevail : Maximilian was left to his fate.

The exhibition was still in mid course when the tragedy of Queretaro came as an omen for the eyes of all. Up to that time the crowd was still content to take Napoleon III at his own valuation. With all the world dancing attendance at his monster garden party, it was hard to believe that he was not doing very well, for, within the ring fence of the Champ-de-Mars, there was everything to charm the senses and the mind. As a supplementary wonder, the glittering show at court included some of the greatest monarchs and statesmen of the world—the King of Prussia among them and Moltke as the intelligent tourist looking on. Even this was not solely for the favoured few : the others had their share of sight-seeing from the kerbstone. When you left the Champ-de-Mars you went into the Champs Élysées or the Bois, for a promenade of princely splendours that seemed to have come straight out of fairyland. Yet in three years or so from that time the Napoleons were in captivity or in exile, and their palace was a heap of smouldering ruins.

But it was good going while it went. I associate it with long lingering summer afternoons in which the dust was golden haze, and the elliptical galleries one within the other, filled with the wonders of the world, were a new variety of Aladdin's palace. It was the *Arabian Nights* in the very sharpness of the contrasts, stately achievements in architecture

if only in stucco, flanked by pitches for wizards and conjurors. The outermost ring was reserved for the refreshment booths of all nations, some of their staffs distinctly home made, with only a costume to keep them in character—Turegs from the Place Pigalle, Arabs from Montmartre. I remember a Tunisian *café* in charge of a pair of turbaned Turks, undoubtedly genuine as being dyed by the sun instead of burnt cork, and guarding a bevy of *odalisques* who were to be regarded by the eye of faith as Circassian slaves, exquisitely trousered in satin and with short jackets to match. One of these presently took up a guitar to sing, as though to soothe her captivity. We expected something from the Persian at the very least: all we had—foreign as it still might be to most of the audience—was to my trained ear nothing in the world but, "Where are you going, my pretty maid?" rendered in the twang of the Cockney gutter.

"What lingo do you call that?" I said to the waiter as he flashed past.—"*n'sais-pas M'sieu: du Tunisien, hein!—'Un bock, boum!'*" I kept the professional secret: at any rate she was a compatriot.

Then there was a Chinese giant with his Chinese wife (small-footed), and a Tartar dwarf for comic relief. The showman, touched by my intelligent curiosity, invited me to lunch with them in private. Ah, if more luncheon parties were like that! It was so delightfully unconventional; all real, and unrehearsed, especially by the dwarf. As the old lady said during the Bulgarian massacres "they

don't call 'em Turks for nothing." A Tartar he was, to be sure, with the years of manhood, but the manners of a spoiled child, and as beseemed his size, the most aggressive person it has ever been my lot to meet at the board of hospitality. It was one of his bad days, as our host explained. He snatched at the viands; he screamed insolent defiance at the giant, and when seized by the gullet in remonstrance he could still foam at the mouth. Then, something going wrong in the attempt to render one of his outlandish dishes in the medium of French cookery, he began to flourish a table knife with intent, till he was carried howling from the room, blaspheming in gutturals that made the blood run cold.

Regarding him as a kind of superfluous *hors d'œuvre*, I found the rest of the entertainment extremely interesting. From first to last the small-footed lady was a problem study in speechless disgust with things in general, not without something to show for it—as I learned when my host obligingly gave me her story.

"You see, I picked up Chang—that was the giant's name—and the little 'un at Canton, and we were almost ready to get aboard when somebody suggested that, to make the whole show absolutely unique, we ought to have a small-footed lady. No sooner said than done. I advanced the giant the needful for a wedding present, and told him to get married at once. He shook his head, and said he was only making the tour to get enough cash to wed the girl of his choice. 'As many as you please, but we must have this

one for the gate-money.' He didn't like it, I could see that; but he took it as part of the day's work, and set out to go a-courting in the Chinese way.

"It was pretty simple. He soon found a Chinese father who was ready for a deal; and after compliments, but without saying a word about the marriage, begged his acceptance of a friendly gift. The parent was profuse in acknowledgments, and asked him if there was anything he could offer in return. 'You have a daughter,' said the wooer; 'may I ask if she has a small foot?' 'That is so,' returned the parent with modest pride; 'our family has seen better days.' 'I want a wife,' said the giant. 'Why certainly,' replied the other, 'with all the pleasure in life.' 'Might I be permitted to see the foot in advance,' said the cautious buyer; 'not, of course, that I doubt your word.' The girl was brought in. She was veiled, but that didn't matter: any face would do. The parent explained the situation, and she lifted the hem of her robe and disclosed the deformity in all its perfection. In a few hours, we were all on our way to Paris for the honeymoon."

From that moment, it seems, or at any rate, as soon as they reached their destination, the poor thing's foot was the curse of her life. The show was crowded; and all for the sake of the small-footed lady as the principal item. The giant became a mere side show, though he did a fair trade in selling his signature at half a franc. The dwarf fared somewhat better, by reason of his shape—all breadth without length—and of his

fiendish ugliness as of a porcelain monster realized in flesh and blood. The bride had to lift the hem of her garment, let us say some one or two or three hundred times a day, on the requisition of any visitor to the show. She did it without a word of protest, but evidently in a smoulder of sullen wrath; and her misery of degradation, for so I understood it, went on till closing time. The women, in their innocence of the state of her feelings, were the worst offenders. A few tried to pinch the foot, but at that she flamed up, and was only to be appeased by a placard in several tongues: "Please don't touch."

The day after the luncheon, on the strength of my intimacies behind the scenes, I undertook to pilot a party to the show, and advanced briskly to the Chinese lady to offer my compliments. She had remained utterly silent during the meal, so I now ventured on: "Do you speak English?" by way of an opening. She spoke enough for me: "You know I no spikkie you naughty mans" was all I got for my pains. With the possible exception of the Emperor Napoleon, she was perhaps the only person in Paris just then who wished the whole exhibition at the bottom of the sea. For her, there was a double degradation in the unveiling of her shoe and the unveiling of her face. It was a comely face, in its contours, though rather too much like a portrait painted on an egg.

Everybody had to come to Paris for this festival: the appeal was almost as world-wide as that of 1851. I met many persons of note at the house of the

correspondent of my paper. He held the strange office of reader for the censor, in one of the ministries: it was his business to look through the English journals, as they arrived by the morning mail, and to blue pencil them for anything that might be of interest for the Government. Occasionally he had to mark for an attack on the Imperial system. In this case, the whole issue had to suffer the humiliation of the blacking brush. The offending passage was obliterated by some mechanical process that rendered it perfectly illegible. And this in the *cité lumière!* These grotesque practices survive in some parts, as signs of certain strata of the growth of civilization and of common sense. In Petrograd, for instance, you ask for your English paper at the hotel, and probably receive it with its news of Russia and its leader all blotched with these hideous disfigurements.

Our correspondent was a man of letters, author of a book or two, and over and above that, one of the best fellows in the world. He had lived so long in Paris that in manners, and even in speech, he was more than half a Frenchman. He cherished interesting superstitions, one of them a relic of the practice of divination by birds. In emergencies, he was wont to consult a canary in his study for the luck of the issue. It was a solemn rite. He coaxed the creature to his work with the promise of a lump of sugar, and immediately received a tiny packet picked at random from a store in the cage. This contained the message of the oracle. Like other deliverances of the same order, all depended on the interpretation; and

in this way it generally presaged the luck he desired. The custom is still widespread in Italy, the storehouse and museum of so many of the beliefs of the race. Until quite a few years ago it flourished in London, as one of the minor industries of Hatton Garden. The parchment-skinned crone, too old to drag the organ, could still earn a trifle at the street corner with her divining bird.

The correspondence was conducted on a system of marital co-operation. The wife wrote the daily letter from dictation, as to the politics; and, as to the social life, collected the daily gossip of the Imperial *fêtes* from friends who had the entry at the Tuileries. She was a sure guide in regard to the toilettes of the Empress, and the most successful creations of Worth. And this for a democratic sheet! but one touch of fashion makes the whole world kin. She took incredible pains with it, rising sometimes with the sun to catch a reigning beauty in bed, for the details of last night's ball.

At this house I met Ouida, who had brought letters of introduction. It was the Ouida of the days of youth, with everything about her the perfection of daintiness, excepting perhaps the rather too massive head which was the penalty she paid for her power with the pen. Her characteristic pose was not wanting—a hand laid with careful carelessness on the arm of the sofa, for the benefit of the company. Her conversation was like her attitude, another study in effects, this time in aristocratic sympathies. Her heroes of the moment were the leaders of the South in

the American Civil War, and in particular General Breckinridge. She gave him glowing, but still condescending praise, such as might have come from a partisan goddess watching the day's work on the plain of Troy.

The dominant ideas of every period are usually reflected in its romance, without necessarily taking their rise in it. The novelist follows the thinker in rendering them into the terms of life. The sentimentalizing heroes of Bulwer's middle period marked our introduction to German studies under the influence of Carlyle. In Ouida's youth we began to change all this, at the bidding of Dr. Dasent in his translations from the Norse, all the more readily because this implied a new compliment to our noble selves. The strong man of the Sagas, suitably arranged for the drawing-room and the tea-table, began to stalk through our fiction with Mr. Rochester.

Ouida followed suit. It was the same sort of hero, but with a dash of scent in peace time to heighten the effect of his Berserker rage in war or the chase. Her great rival was a writer known as *The Author of Guy Livingstone*, a character generally and genially engaged in pulverizing everyone who came in his way. He grew tiresome in due course, only to return to favour in our day as the lawless superman of the existing school retouched to harmonize him with Nietzschean theories of a coming race. In the interval, it was poor Ouida's fate to suffer eclipse at the hands of Rhoda Broughton who was able to supply a new utility man for the drama of love.

Ouida was naturally much interested in her host, a man of family, and of air and elegance to match. He seemed, and I believe was, unconscious of the honour, but his wife took care that he should not remain so. One day, when he was hard at work on his letter, she stole softly into his study, and dropping a photograph of the charmer on his desk, as quietly withdrew.

"What on earth's that for?" came in irate tones from the desk. "Inspiration, dear," in dulcet tones from the door.

Poor fellow! he was one of the victims of the siege. A serious accident prevented him from leaving the city before the gates were closed, and the hardships and the want of proper nourishment did the rest. The devoted wife used afterwards to relate, with tears in her eyes, how hard set she was to find dainties for him. At last, I believe, in her desperation, she had to fall back on the canary. One pictures the little divining bird, in the slackness of business, pecking omens from habit and all unconsciously drawing his own.

As I have said, it was good going while it lasted. The Empress was in the perfection of her beauty; and the charm of mind was supplied in the *salons* of the Emperor's cousin, the Princess Mathilde, who had Flaubert, Taine, Dumas *fils*, About, and Octave Feuillet in her little court. She was no niggard of these treasures, for sometimes, as women do with their fineries, she lent one to her other good cousin, by marriage, on the throne.

Octave Feuillet, especially, was passed on to Eugénie in this way—perhaps as the safest of the

set for a person holding the Imperial position. His work was a blend of the risky situation and the moral reproof. *Le Roman d'un jeune Homme Pauvre*, which placed him, overdid the moral in being somewhat superfluously correct, but he soon made good with *Monsieur de Camors*, the best example in his matured style. *Monsieur* was of those who are not a bit better than they should be, but he compensated by giving the heroine to understand that she was in the same plight. The indispensable touch of impropriety was still there, but it was impropriety on the stool of repentance, and the situation was saved to ethical ends. Both are hard reading now, the first especially as an impossible attempt to combine priggishness with fire. The other may still survive, as family reading tempered by the lock and key in the interest of the young person. It served to give the author his label as the " Musset of families."

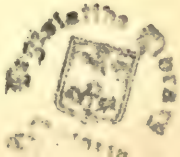
The Princess could afford to choose her stars for their brightness, and for that alone. As a matter of personal taste she drew the line at Republicans, and lost Sainte-Beuve in consequence, but with Taine and Renan in reserve, she was able to bear her lot with fortitude.

The Princess of Metternich, wife of the Austrian Ambassador, was common to both circles. She was the *enfant terrible* of the Tuileries. Her private theatricals were a longing for all who had not the privilege of admission. Her note was the audacity of the music-hall, combined with the refinement of exalted station, the merry rattle at one moment, with the possibility of a quick change

in difficulties to the *grande dame.* Only she could have ventured to call the greatest of the Rothschilds her "domestic Jew," without any fear of the consequences. The Italian Countess of Castiglione, who made her *début* much in the same way, had the charm of beauty with a certain dash that was her substitute for wit. But when her looks faded, and other disappointments came, she withdrew in a kind of horror from the world. Madame de Pourtales, and Madame de Rattazzi helped to make things hum.

The American Dr. Evans, dentist to the court, ought not to be overlooked in a survey of the social forces of the hour. His illustrious patients necessarily opened their mouths freely to him, and he learnt many a secret which he was able to turn to account in the advancement of his private fortunes, though in no corrupt way. He heard betimes, for instance, of the projected Avenue of the Empress, and bought up the ramshackle properties on the line of route to resell at enormous profit when the time came. One of the vainest of men, he provided his own statue for his native city. It was a sort of co-operative scheme: he supplied the statue, and the municipality supplied the site. With all this he could be a good friend in the hour of need. As everybody knows, he came in very handy indeed when the Empress had to escape from the Tuileries during the disasters of the war. Her wretched servants were plundering the palace as she slipped out by a side door.

But this was all to come; and what a time it



was when the " crowned heads of Europe " were dropping in for the exhibition one by one, or as often as not two at a time. The Tsar and the King of Prussia overlapped in this way. The Prussians had thoughtfully sent one of their biggest guns to the show, and I daresay it found its way back a second time, for use, when Paris lay at the mercy of their siege artillery on the adjacent heights. The thrifty invaders might have saved money by warehousing it for their return.

The fun was fast and furious. One of my recollections is of a grand dinner given by Émile de Girardin to the correspondents of the foreign papers, Whitehouse of *The Daily Telegraph* among them. He was a " feature " in his solemn affectations, a kind of Malvolio rarely wanting in the austere regard of control. He seemed to be on the most confidential terms with the Emperor, and when he told us that His Majesty had driven out yesterday and enjoyed his dinner on his return, we were able to feel well informed. In the office, I believe, he was cherished, as a model for touch, by young lions in the 'prentice stage.

Marie Roze, then in the plenitude of her beauty and charm, sang to us—a never-to-be-forgotten night.

And, for the public scene, Schneider if you please, and Theresa, not to speak of " La Belle Ernestine," shepherdess and innkeeper at Etretat, then in course of discovery by Alphonse Karr. How focus it, except as a Cubist study in confusions with no focus at all. Seen in this perspective of years it reminds one of those compositions in the

confectioners' shops—pigmies of highly soluble sugar footing it with much confidence on an earth-crust of the same.

On this second visit, I lived for awhile in the Batignolles. For me there is something classic in the simple and wholesome freedom of that district from all the affectations of style. It is for quite humble, if not exactly vulgar people—little employees eking out a modest wage, third-rate actors playing in third-rate pieces, in a theatre to match. The man who cobbles your shoes in the daytime, may at night be a nobleman of drama with a small speaking part. It is, or at any rate was then, intimate, familiar, a bit dirty but snug, though at smug it drew the line. It had little back gardens, not without trees, in lieu of a stony *cour*, little ball-rooms in which you entered free, and paid a *sou* every time you danced, little *restaurants* where you dined at fabulously moderate prices on the understanding of no questions asked as to origins. Its people were a vast family, with little civilities, or at times little quarrels for their family tie : the porter's lodge was the clearing-house for the news of the whole quarter.

I used to buy my paper of an old lady who kept a small stationer's shop, and who was occasionally assisted by a young one who kept the books. Quiet and soft-spoken this last, and timid till she came to know you well : then a chatterbox of the gentler sort. She got her living, such as it was, by giving lessons in something or other, taking her wages at the stationer's in the run of all the literature, periodical and other, of the stock-in-trade.

At rare intervals she gave a select tea party in the garden of her modest lodging hard by, and devoured her own refreshments in a way that suggested short commons as her normal fare.

I lost sight of her when I lost sight of Paris, which happened for that occasion when I was recalled at the close of the exhibition. This led to my missing the siege and the *Commune* as things seen—a great loss. But one day, long after my return, while toying with a French paper in a *café* in Soho, I read her name. She was bracketed with the most notorious of the *pétroleuses* who helped to set the city on fire when the insurgents reached their last ditch in the graveyard of Montmartre. Most of them were caught black-handed and fell under the rifles or the bayonets of the soldiery without distinction of sex. In regard to this one, the paper could only express a pious hope that, if still at large, she might soon have her appropriate reward.

I never heard of her again.

Many as gentle as she went mad under the privations of the siege and the excitement of the insurrection, and whether dead or alive, when it was all over, vanished into an obscurity equal to the night of the grave. The latter would have made shorter work of it for one so sorely tried. She craved for affection as a birthright, and life had not been "nice" to her in that respect. I never could understand why it was not: she was so happily endowed with likeable faults. "Why did you make me hate you?" might have been the catchword of her swan's song.

Presently I removed to the Latin quarter, for a change; and other episodes of the same interesting quality were not wanting. The hotel was a hotch-potch of students, and foreigners more or less of that standing, from all parts of the world. One of these was a young German—in looks a sort of St. Michael, blue-eyed, and blond-haired as with a nimbus, and disabled by a swelling on the knee due, I should say, to his perambulations of the city in search of omniscience. Seeing how it was with him, a French lad from one of the hospitals immediately took him in charge as doctor and nurse, and looked after him like a brother, pestering his own professors in daily consultations till he pulled his patient through. I have often wondered whether they afterwards encountered as conscripts at Gravelotte or Sedan. It would have been only an additional touch of the colour of life.

But this again was for the future; and the point is that, splendours or miseries, good hap or bad, they were all, in some curious way, part of the revel. The revel was at its best one beautiful day towards the end of June when, as I noticed, the Emperor, returning from a drive, sat bunched up in his carriage as with sheer worry. The news had come that his puppet Maximilian had fallen under the rifles of Mexican rebels, with the whole military power of France unable to lift a hand to save him. It crowned only the edifice of his blunders, and it broke his spell. No wonder: think of trying to govern a quick-witted people as, in mid-nineteenth century, he had tried to govern the French.

"I'll go to hell with anybody," roared the skipper in the storm, as he kicked the incompetent steersman from the tiller; "but I don't want to go looking foolish." A Napoleon, bearing a sceptre tipped with a blacking brush, had that air.

## CHAPTER VII

### INTERVIEWING

MY next foreign mission was Geneva, for the *Alabama* arbitration. I had left *The Star*. Justin McCarthy had resigned the editorship to go to the States on a lecturing and writing tour, and John Morley had taken his place. He was the latest portent in the Radical journalism of that day, a thinker, and to some extent a man of action, tempered with caution by the consideration that he might one day have to make good his words as a critic in politics by his deeds as a statesman. This kept him cool, if also at times somewhat cold, on the surface, though there was fire enough within. He has excelled in both parts; and of how few can we say the same thing.

He was not happy at *The Star*. He had been called in too late: the paper was *in extremis*. It had paid the penalty of its fidelity to the North in the American Civil War: heart failure induced by defective circulation might have been the verdict, if the matter had come before a Coroner's court. But it had done its work in helping to save England from the blunder of an alliance with the slave power.

We seemed perilously near that alliance when Palmerston poured his ten thousand men into

Canada to enforce the just demand for the release of the Confederate Commissioners, captured on the high seas when they were under the protection of the British flag. It was a spirited stroke of policy, but it had some curious results. The five figures of our expeditionary force began rapidly to dwindle to four as soon as it reached its destination. The North wanted recruits; the British soldier wanted better pay; and knowing that it awaited him on the other side of the frontier, he deserted wholesale and took service under the Stars and Stripes. It is hardly too much to say that one-half of the contingent was employed in keeping the other under the colours, till it was wisely recalled.

So now I was a journalist at large, and I began to write for *The New York World* under the resident London Correspondent of the paper. Geneva was my first commission of importance. This was in 1872, when England was going into arbitration on the *Alabama* claims, on a sort of foregone conclusion that she was to be a loser by the transaction. In the course of the war she had suffered the *Alabama* and the most destructive of her consorts to be built, or equipped and manned, in English ports. The result was a tremendous bill for damages, direct or indirect; and all that the international Tribunal had to do was to cut it down to a figure that might be acceptable to both parties. Sir Roundell Palmer, afterwards Lord Selborne, as leading counsel, and Sir Alexander Cockburn, as a member of the Court, were the chief representatives of England. Mr. Caleb

Cushing, Mr. Waite and Mr. Evarts were counsel for the United States. Palmer kept his temper, whatever he may have thought of his mission: Cockburn did not profit by the example. I happened to travel to Geneva by the train that took him to his destination, and he seemed to glare discontent as he alighted here and there, to pace the platform for a breather.

Unfortunately he took his temper with him into Court; and Mr. Cushing made no secret of his sense of the discourtesy of this proceeding. Following the etiquette of their profession, the American lawyers were for harmonious social relations with the other side, but they found it impossible, at any rate with Cockburn. Invitations to dinner were steadily declined, and there was no knowing where to have him even for an exchange of views on the state of the weather. He was a proud man; it was galling to him to think that such a case should have been arbitrated at all. He seemed to chafe under it, while his British colleague, like a true advocate, took it all as part of the day's work. This perhaps was another grievance. They were certainly an ill-assorted pair: Palmer, smooth as Addison (not to say as Sir John Simon), the other savage as Swift.

There were faults on both sides. Cushing was rather sweet on himself as the man who seemed to "know the language" wherever he went. He not only wrote, but argued his case in French, for the benefit of three of the arbitrators, who were without a word of English, but who had no right to expect relief at the expense of other members

of the tribunal. As a bench of judges, to say nothing of the advocates, they were strange yokefellows to be sure—a Swiss, an Italian, and a Brazilian with but the Englishman and the American as perfect masters of our tongue. French, of course, was quite in order as the official language, but when Cushing proceeded to air his Italian in asides for the benefit of Count Sclopis, the pair probably had it all to themselves. At any rate Cockburn objected, and the other could think of nothing better in reply than to offer him any language to his liking, "not excepting Chinese." Years before, it seems, he had negotiated the first American treaty with China.

But, whatever the provocation, Cockburn went simply all to pieces as to dignity and courtesy in other stages of the quarrel. He charged the American counsel with "strange misrepresentations, assertions without a shadow of foundation, attempts to practise on the credulity or ignorance of the Bench, ignorance of law and history," and with other unpleasant things, including "imaginations that must have been lively, while their consciences slept." It was so bad that at one point Mr. Adams jumped up and threatened to sit there no longer to hear his country traduced. For this, however, the offender had the grace to apologize. But he kept it up to the last, refusing to sign the judgment as a whole, and publishing his reasons as a sort of minority report.

Appropriately enough, in regard to the confusion of tongues, the tribunal sat in the ancient Town Hall of Geneva, which, with its winding way

instead of a staircase, was reminiscent of early pictures of the Tower of Babel. There were no steps. You mounted by an inclined plane whereon a trick cyclist might easily have ridden from bottom to top as a demonstration in hill-climbing. A door, guarded by ushers and festooned with flags, marked the scene of the deliberations. The correspondents stood in line in the ante-chamber to see the arbitrators pass in, and if possible to catch secrets from their glances. Cockburn's signals, as we have seen, were misleading as being always at storm.

Caleb Cushing was one of those who fell to my lot for subsequent calls. He was always kindly and sometimes communicative if you knew how to manage him, but woe to those who tried to reach him by the machinery of the interview. They came out as empty as they went in, and what was more aggravating hardly discovered it till they were on their way to the telegraph office. Then they found that he had simply interviewed the interviewer. It was unique as a new process in this branch of the art of self-defence, and triumphantly successful: there was no getting within his guard. It would run somewhat in this way :—

*Pumper.* Good morning, Mr. Cushing.

*Pumpee.* Good morning, good morning. How are you getting on ?

*Pumper.* Not very well as to news: I suppose you have now come to pretty close quarters with the Arbit——

*Pumpee.* Oh that: yes, pretty close. But has

it occurred to you that this is a most interesting city?

*Pumper.* I daresay; but as to the Arbit——?

*Pumpee.* One of the most interesting cities in the world. Why do you know that this lake at our feet has been the scene of some of the most exciting naval battles in history.

*Pumper.* As I was about to say, the *Alabama*——

*Pumpee.* Oh centuries before that — canton against canton, galleys by the hundred, with men chained to the oar. One side out for conquest, and the other for independence. Your readers would like that.

*Pumper.* Just now, I fancy, they would be rather more interested in the——

*Pumpee.* You'll find all about it in a little book on the Quay: only two francs seventy-five, and crammed with facts.

Interviewing was ever an abomination to me, and I made a firm stand against it as soon as I could. The blame for it lies chiefly with the editors, who in this connection are as generals enjoying the snug repose of guarded tents while they decree forlorn hopes for their followers, very often but as a line of least resistance in tactical invention. Never shall I forget the embarrassments of one adventure of this sort, which I undertook years after, at the bidding of the egregious Hurlbert. He was in London at the moment; and in a mood of lightness of heart he summoned me from afar to his temporary chambers in the Albany. I went, and was asked to interview Disraeli and Gladstone at once on—things in general, for

there was not a word of intelligent direction as to what they were to be interviewed about. Both were at their country places, and Disraeli was first on the list. Hurlbert was of some consequence in the London society of the time, and he gave me letters of introduction from himself to these eminent persons, written rather in soft soap than in ink. There was nothing for it, so I started straight for Hughenden, lightly meditating modes of painless suicide on the journey.

There was no need of that: it was so soon over in another way: "His Lordship is sorry; he is particularly engaged to-day. But, if you would like to see the peacocks——"

"Very much, if only they were talking birds. Good afternoon!"

What a failure as a mission; but, as putting off an hour of humiliation, what a relief!

Hawarden next day.

With what topic should I try to start *him?* I meditated it for miles and hours to the rhythmic beat of the engine. Three possibilities emerged in a sort of *replica* of his own three courses in every situation. Though still coquetting with the idea of retirement from politics, he was already preparing for the spring that was to bring him back into power. Thus they stood.

1. He had lately written, in *The North American Review*, "Kin Beyond Sea"—a sort of counter-blast to the new-fangled Imperialism of his rival.

2. He was at daggers drawn with the classes as distinct from the masses.

3. He had long since said that Jefferson Davis had made a nation, but he had not lived it down in its effect on public opinion in the Northern States.

The last in reserve, if the others failed; but any or all would do, if only I could get my chance.

Hawarden itself seemed a perfect castle of indolence in its approaches. At the lower gate, by which I entered, there was no porter in charge of the unfinished lodge: and I had nearly a mile's walk through a leafy avenue without meeting a soul. Next a battlement came in view through the screen of branches, then a large outbuilding inscribed "Mrs. Gladstone's Orphanage," and I was in the courtyard. There was still not a sign of a human being, not even of an orphan; but presently I caught sight of a thoroughly characteristic figure for a place of this description, the beggar at the gate. I passed the beggar, rang at the hall door, but, as no one answered either a first or a second summons, I was glad to return and take my place by the sturdy fellow's side. The servant lad who had come out to relieve his wants was made acquainted with mine; and I returned to the main door to have it opened at last.

It was still a silence, if not a solitude, as the man took my card and my precious letter of introduction without a word. There was, however, no lack of good company in many portraits of the Glyn family hanging in the spacious hall. Most of them evidently belonged to that period of the great civil

war in which their originals made a mighty stride in fortune by purchasing Hawarden, one of the sequestered estates of James, seventh Earl of Derby, who had just perished by the axe. They held it thenceforth, until Mr. Gladstone came to share the possession by his marriage with the family. One seemed a very long way off indeed from the civil, or any other wars, in this peaceful vestibule; and there was nothing to disturb the harmony of association in the drawing-room beyond richly stored with old china. Old china was one of the tastes of which Mr. Gladstone had repented—a sort of folly of youth in which he had spent many thousand pounds of his once ample fortune. But he had repented, like most of us not without some snatches of kindly remembrance of the pleasures of the old sin.

The man was quick enough this time. "Mr. Gladstone is exceedingly sorry, but——"

It was a case for desperate measures, and I took the first to hand.

"Give my compliments to Mr. Gladstone and say that I am exceedingly sorry too. I have come a long way in the hope of seeing him for a few moments. It seems rather hard——"

He was soon back again. "Will you please walk this way"; and in another moment I was in the drawing-room and face to face with my head of the herd.

One glance at him was enough to forbid all thought of the ease of retirement. He came in hurriedly, as though fresh from the most pressing labours—if one might judge by the purposeful

set of the lines of his face. There was no missing this expression. The face was the first thing you looked at, and the last. I was going to say the only thing, but I belie myself by adding that he was dressed from head to foot in light sporting tweed. The contrast was striking; the body all country gentleman—down even to the heavy shooting boots—the head all statesman thinker, and, but for the brightness of the eye, toilworn recluse. It was a contrast that ran through every detail of his appearance. What were these stories of him as a woodman, a feller of oaks on the estate? Surely one oak in a season should suffice to exhaust the energies of this spare and narrow, not to say wasted frame. Age had assuredly told on him: I seemed to be looking on almost a little man. The vast head was altogether out of proportion to its supports, a phenomenon seemingly akin in kind, though not in degree, to that presented by the appearance of the poet Swinburne, whose trunk seemed but an inadequate mechanical contrivance for carrying his brain about.

"I am so engaged," he said with a smile that was matched in grave sweetness of expression by his always incomparable voice, "that I am compelled to seem discourteous to all who call without an appointment, but I shall be most happy to send someone to show you the house and grounds."

More peacocks, I thought.

"I must be frank enough to admit," I replied, "that my sole desire is to see their owner. The author of 'Kin Beyond Sea,' I am afraid, must

thank himself if that wish is shared by all who like to see justice done to the spirit of American institutions by an English public man."

He led the way through the open window to the lawn: I had got him at last.

"And yet, in a sense, I assure you I made the study as much for my own countrymen as for the Americans. I have long felt that we in England need a warning to set our house in order, and that no time can be better than this when we are on the brink of fresh imperial responsibilities."

It was my turn now, but I was too nervous to do much better than talk like a book.

"You have done but strict justice to America in praising her for bearing some of the heaviest burdens of war in time of peace for the sake of clearing off the national debt. And may I say, without presumption, that another good example might have been found in the steady resistance of the Union to mere annexations for the increase of territory."

"No doubt, but in this case self-control is to some extent imposed upon the American people by circumstances, or is, at least, obviously suggested by them. They know the value of the blessing they have in their vast continuous territory. It can hardly be exaggerated. I have dwelt on that, you may observe, very earnestly in the article which you kindly say has so interested you, and I hope I have succeeded in making it a capital point."

"Different circumstances," I said, "should have imposed the same caution on Englishmen. As it is,

the very people are shouting over our deal for Cyprus."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I had already expressed my opinion on that subject pretty plainly in Parliament, and I could not have returned to it without passing the limits assigned to the article. One great object with me in writing was to warn certain classes in England—and these by no means the humblest in any sense—of the danger of certain new lines of policy."

"The 'leisured classes' I think you call them?"

"If you like; and you will notice perhaps how the well-meant warning has been received by the organs of these classes in the English Press. Is it possible to exceed the abuse and execration poured upon me? It almost passes my comprehension. I have never spoken nor acted in regard to any class, with any other desire than to further its truest interests."

He stopped, woefully short of his allotted span of two columns. I had to bring up my reserves.

"They have not spared you, I observe, Mr. Gladstone, on this occasion, even the old and stale reproach of having declared yourself a well-wisher of Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy."

"And I have not answered that charge, because I have already met it once, and, as I think, fully and satisfactorily, in a letter written for publication on the other side of the Atlantic. What is the truth about it? In my first utterance on the subject I merely stated what, to my mind, appeared to be a fact. I did not express a feeling. As I then read the American Constitution it gave the States a right

to secede; and that in so reading it I was not alone among impartial observers, it is scarcely necessary for me to say. But this, of course, would not content some persons who were determined to misunderstand me, and I was said to have wished success to the Confederate cause, though I had never concealed my conviction that the act of secession was in every respect a mistake. But, I repeat, all this was explained in the letter I have alluded to, and, but for your reference to it, I should certainly not have thought it necessary to return to the subject. I am, indeed, still of my original opinion, but what I have now said is in no sense a supplementary explanation for the public in general, since, in my judgment, none is needed. At least (firmly) I have none to offer."

Still short of full measure: I had to hark back to the *Review*.

"You will very probably be accused of having urged America to try the experiment of constitutional monarchy. I was struck by a passage in your article which might easily bear a construction of that sort."

"Only, as in the other case, by confounding a statement, or what in this case is hardly even a statement, with the expression of a wish. Read the passage again."

"It has occurred to me," I said, "as I daresay it has to others, that your temperate panegyric on the British Constitution involves a severe censure on the manner in which the Constitution is now being worked."

He walked, but he no longer talked.

"The Sovereign," I continued, "is but one great power in the State, acting in harmony with the rest, yet how much has lately been done to reduce Parliament to the position of a mere recorder of decrees."

Still walking.

"It is impossible, too, to forget that the man who has revived this view of the Constitution of our day, has also secured a great accession of strength for his own office. The Premier may soon be a sort of grand vizier over his colleagues, and the virtual ruler of the nation."

More exercise.

"There was one very striking passage in 'Kin Beyond Sea'—the implied charge against democracies of ingratitude to their champions and deliverers.

I said this, as having in my mind, his: "It seems very possible that after a few years we may see most of the labourers, both in the Southern States and in England, actively addicted to the political support of their countrymen who, to the last, have resisted their emancipation." Plainly enough written with a bitter remembrance of his own fall from power.

He broke silence at last, but it was only a valedictory:

"Would you like to see the old castle? this part is the new house."

"Thank you: I am afraid I have already taken up too much of your time."

But his scalp was in my belt; and a pretty poor sort of savage I felt for my pains.

To have talked with him was uplifting, in the sense that one had touched history. He was an event—prophet and pragmatist in one, a man of deep conviction, yet still able to take what I believe to be the right view of politics, as a business transaction in spiritual affairs. His modesty was deep and sincere ; at the same time, it was definable as an art of inducing people to forgive success.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SPAIN IN REVOLUTION

SPAIN followed Geneva as a mission, in 1873, this time for the New York *Tribune*. Amadeus of Italy, chosen to fill the Spanish throne after the expulsion of Isabella, had left it vacant again by his sudden resignation at the beginning of the year. He was an honest man, Prim's choice in the emergency, and Prim's mind was of those that yield their best in a quick brew. But Amadeus had been boycotted by court and people as a foreigner, and being quite their match in pride, he packed his trunks and went home again. His grandees never attended his receptions, and generally speaking left him in a void. He wrote a parting address of great dignity and was escorted to the frontier with every mark of respect. If kings showed a little more of that spirit, it would be better for them: it is their insistence on being the only servants, public or private, who decline to 'take warning' that so often brings them to mischance.

The Republicans with Castelar and Figueras at their head, the latter much against his will, got the Republic proclaimed, and the Carlists had already started the inevitable insurrection.

I went straight through to Madrid to take stock of the situation. There was but one sign of trouble

on the way. The train came to a sudden halt—no difficulty with Spanish trains—and word ran from carriage to carriage of a bomb found on the line. It served to beguile the tedium of a long journey, more especially as we made Madrid without farther incident.

There, it was all new to me in being at least as old as Borrow and Ford, to go no farther. I put up in the Puerta del Sol, and the morning after my arrival I heard guitars in the street below, and looking out saw the University students in full fig for a masquerade—black silk from top to toe, knee-breeches, and the spoon in their cocked-hats. This brought us at least to Cervantes, and was very good going backwards for a first day. They were out in the old fashion for dramatized caricature, this time at the expense of some unpopular person represented by a sort of guy in a coffin. My letters, as one may imagine, began to write themselves.

There were other correspondents at the hotel, among them Coutouly of *The Temps* who afterwards, in quite a normal way with journalists in France, became French ambassador to one of the European courts. He knew his Spain well, and helped me greatly in the handling of the ropes. He at once took me to see Castelar, now lodged in the palace just left by the late king. My most vivid recollection of the visit is that Amadeus smoked excellent cigars. The French of the new tenant was of a sort that you could cut with a knife. He talked gloriously in the fine florid manner of his speeches and of his University

lectures, unconditioned by any troublesome intrusion of mere practical ways and means for the government of men. We were going to have a great time of it in the regeneration of Spain : wait and see.

While waiting I presented my letters of introduction, and in particular made the acquaintance of an American family long domiciled in Madrid. They took me to the opera in the family coach, and, to my inexpressible joy, thought it necessary to have a stout fellow on the box by the coachman, with pistols in his belt, and, if I remember rightly, another man-at-arms in the boot. Nothing happened but at least it was Old Spain once more. It was like that in everything. At the local bank you were reconnoitred through a hole in the door, and locked in again on crossing the threshold.

And so to the Chamber for a lively debate, with the Press correspondents taking free interjectional part in it from the gallery in which we all sat. One ceased, for the moment, to feel like a foreigner, for the accents and the gestures interpreted at least half of it without the help of words. The same sort of assistance stood me in good stead in subsequent visits to the play-houses, whenever there was a lull in the political storm. All I wanted was the general scheme of the piece ; the sonorous declamation did the rest. Here again manners and customs were as old as *Gil Blas*.

But this naturally was too good to last. It was still the dream only ; while the business was about as bad as bad could be. Poor Spain had to make her reckoning with the time spirit ; and, at her

age, she was not to be rejuvenated at a bound. The Cortes had no sooner voted the Republic, than the trouble began. What sort of Republic should it be? asked the Federals and Communists—the latter being, in essentials, the old *Commune* of Paris, spoiling for another fight. This cry set the south in a flame of revolt, for a republic of state rights. No, said the Government at Madrid, it should be Liberal but fairly centralized, with all the nice things in it—separation of church and state, free religious worship, abolition of the nobility, equal electoral districts as to the count of "souls," and the army reorganized but still only on the old basis of conscription. Great cities declared their independence, while the armies went forth to put them down, with all the cumbrous machinery of the pitched battle and the siege.

The eastern provinces were for a turn at Anarchy on their own account, and one fine day the sailors of Cartagena began to sneak off with the fleet. Two ships began their travels in this way, until they were captured by the German vessels on the station, and handed over to the British Admiral for safe keeping. They still showed fight, till he trained his guns on them ready to fire. They were then stored at Gibraltar, and in due course, restored, with compliments, to the *de facto* government. Here now were pretty quarrels among republicans, to say nothing of the Basques in the north-west, out for Church and King—of the Legitimist variety—with battles and massacres galore. The Don Carlos of the moment had long passed out of the condition of personality to become the

label of a system in which it was merged. He had come out in the time of Amadeus, in sacred protest against the House of Savoy which had made the Pope the prisoner of the Vatican. His opportunity found him in pleasant quarters in the Riviera or elsewhere, and he drew the necessary cheques for his agents in the provinces on his inexhaustible civil list of revolt. When all was ready, he set forth in great state to take the field, with court and staff and all the rest of it in his train. The local priests brought in their levies, not a few of them armed with the blunderbuss warranted at a single discharge to cover a whole barn door with wounds. At first it seemed a sort of devils' dance of the brute forces of the prime, with an insane *curé* of Santa Cruz levying blackmail by shooting men, tarring, feathering or flogging women, and making it hard for the most hardened of optimists to echo the cry " God's in His heaven—all's right with the world ! "

South and east were eventually reduced, and a Federal Republic of sorts was constituted in due form, but the Carlists still kept the butchery going, till the land seemed to sweat blood. After six months of it poor Castelar, much to his astonishment no doubt, found himself President of the Cortes and virtual dictator, with all the welter still on his hands. Four months more and he was voted into nothingness, to bring the first year to a close. Then, with the opening of 1874, the discontented soldiery, blindly obeying their chiefs, took the whole matter in hand, forcibly turned the Cortes out of doors, and put Serrano into power as a kind of first step

of a return to the old Liberal monarchy, or as you were. As a man of business and of few words, he at once declared all Spain in a state of siege. By December, Alfonso, son of the exiled Isabella, was ready with his manifesto as "Spaniard, Catholic and Liberal," and on the very last day of the year he was proclaimed king. 1875 was all savage fighting with the Carlists. The spring of 1876 saw Don Carlos a fugitive at Bayonne, and Alfonso making his triumphant entry into Madrid for the beginning of a peaceful and fairly successful reign that lasted till his death. The attempt to make a Republic with ultra-Republicans had failed: in their hurry for the millennium they fell over their own feet. Spain had boxed the compass and was a monarchy once more.

The innermost meaning of it all is that the old Spain of the common people wants to be a new Spain, just as the old Russia, Turkey, China, Persia of the same classes want to make the same change. All the picturesque races are longing to get rid of their fleas, or, in other terms, to improve themselves out of the sordid conditions that make them so interesting to the onlooker with the sketch book. The Spanish people hated conscription for the army, yet in the lack of statesmanship among the governing classes, it was impossible to govern in any other way. Castelar had to yield on this point, and when he yielded he was done for in the eyes of the masses, especially of those who had been made soldiers against their will. All were penniless and miserable under the absentee landlords in the country, and the carpet-bagger lawyers

in the towns. As many as could emigrated to the Americas, or went into brigandage at home for a living.

The loss of the victimized colonies has enormously improved the prospect. Spain is learning to depend on herself: "here or nowhere is America" will be the motto now. With more businesslike conditions of government, the people, especially the peasantry, are less wretched, and that is at least a first step on the road to better things.

When the Irreconcilables, otherwise the double-dyed Reds, broke out against the republic at Barcelona, Figueras made a special journey to quiet them down, with one of the deepest-dyed of their number, Roque Barcia, for his bear-leader. The United States sent a warship, by way of moral support, and he came on board. I saw him there, a tired old man distributing tired handshakes, and still more tired smiles, till it was time to get back again, and shoulder the orb of his fate.

Having given the Revolution its send-off for my readers, I had to get home, this time by way of Perpignan. There was no through communication with France by railway, on that side, and we had to cross the Pyrenees in a diligence. For the tourist, it was the perfection of the picturesque, ancient walled towns asleep behind their battlements, with their gates closed against all comers, and, at the end of the journey, the floor of a railway station for a bed, for want of an hotel equal to the strain.

All these difficulties were complicated by personal ambitions and personal jealousies to an

almost inconceivable extent. Not the least of such trials was the Queen-Mother Isabella in her new part of mother-in-law. There was much excuse for her. On the principle of visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, she could not forgive her son's first wife Mercedes the crime of her origin as a Montpensier. Isabella had a horrible upbringing in her mother's court, and when she was marriageable Louis Philippe and his minister, M. Guizot, who posed as a model of all the virtues, contrived to have her united to a man whose infirmities seemed to preclude all possibility of his having an heir. And on the very day of the ceremony, by a gross breach of faith, the precious pair found a husband for her younger sister, next in the succession, in the Duke of Montpensier, a son of the French king. They had therefore only to wait for the death of the childless queen to have every hope of seeing the younger sister or one of her children on the throne, and French influence predominant in Madrid. It very nearly led to war between England and France, and Palmerston, this time speaking for Queen Victoria as well as himself, rapped out against it with his accustomed energy. But one thing brought it all to nothing: Isabella did not prove childless, and the arch intriguers were compelled to keep their thoughts to themselves, if only because, in France, marriage precludes all legal inquiry as to paternity.

Years after I was received by her in special audience at her Parisian *Palais de Castille*, in the Avenue du Roi de Rome. She struck me as one whose misfortunes were due far less to heredity

than to environment. She was of extreme simplicity of manners, and I should certainly think of a good heart. With decent parentage and guardianship she would probably have done exceedingly well in any station—the humbler perhaps the better, but that is true of most of us. She was *bonne femme*, with sparkling eyes, a ready laugh, a personality that seemed all good nature and the desire to please and to be pleased. Her talk—chatter, I had almost called it—abounded in the indiscretions which are a main note of the character. She was busy matchmaking, as she might have been busy with crochet work, and she made no secret of her wish to see her son Alfonso united to an English princess—he had become a widower within a few months of his first marriage. Her almost factious opposition to this union was the cause of her having to leave Spain a second time. She had barely been allowed to return on a promise of abstention from all public affairs, when she could find nothing better to do than denounce the match, and she had to forfeit her pension, and "quit."

She was quite equal to the occasion, and ostentatiously sold her jewels, by way of putting her disobedient son to shame. There never was such a sale: it took some weeks, spread—with the intervals to enable the public to recover its breath—over a period of four months. All this time the auctioneers were tap-tap-tapping to disperse these hoards of a lifetime, or perhaps of a whole dynasty. One could but think of the almost irresponsible owners of such wealth at one end of

the scale of living, and of the chestnut, or, for that matter, acorn-fed wild men of the cork woods, at the other. There were over three hundred lots, and this did not extend to the odds and ends of cameos, smaller jewels, medallions and a sort of sweepings of unmounted pearls. The greater lots were in the form of *parures*, that is to say full sets in one pattern of diadem, bracelets, ear-rings, girdle and all the needful odds and ends. One network of emeralds set in brilliants, called a collar, might better have deserved the name of a breastplate as its lowest gem would have touched the waist. It was in truth quite a piece of architecture, and it might have served in Liliput as a façade. Like many of the other lots, it had to be divided owing to the impossibility of finding a buyer for it as it stood. Such too was the fate of a butterfly, the sport of sunny hours, but decidedly one of tropical breed, for it was nearly as big as your hand. It was too gross for even a queen of Brobdingnag, and would have vulgarized any woman who wore it, no matter what her natural distinction. One shuddered to think of its damaging effect on Isabella of Spain. All jewels surely should be worn in single specimens, not in the bunch —the one entire and perfect chrysolite is enough. The excess is the fault of the jewellers who think that twice one always makes two, when in such matters it often brings you back to zero. The whole thing was *brutal* in the French sense.

Like many another *bonne femme*, the queen had quite a child mind. The person highest in her confidence in her retirement of the *Palais de*

*Castille* was her pet dwarf. He had a ready wit and an intelligent face. His turn-out was, if not one of the most splendid, at least one of the neatest in Paris. He drove a pony, not much larger than a Newfoundland dog, in a trap that reminded you of the vehicles to which the goats are harnessed in the Champs Élysées. Everything was in keeping about him, with the exception of his cigar, and that being of the ordinary size was big enough to serve him as a walking-stick. He had an establishment; and his servants (who, it must be confessed, were as much out of keeping as the weed, in being of the common stature) seemed to treat him with the most profound respect.

Before her downfall Isabella always kept a dwarf, perhaps to show her regard for the ways of her predecessors on the throne. To judge by what one sees in the picture gallery at Madrid, the Spanish court would have been only more thoroughly incomplete without a monarch than without a freak. There is the king, and there is the pigmy —the latter often in the same picture and always close at hand. Sometimes he shows a sad face, as of one ever murmuring at fortune for having made him greater than other men, because nature had made him immeasurably less; sometimes he seems pleasantly puffed up with a sense of self-importance, as though he understood the royal "we" to include himself and his master. Many a minister of state is missing from the gallery, but there seems to be no break in the succession of dwarfs. When these pictures were painted nearly every court in Europe had a curiosity of this

description, and the little men were so highly prized that they were among the few objects of interest which princes could present to one another. But the demand for them gradually ceased as common sense spread upwards from the people to their rulers; the French Revolution brought it almost to a standstill, and the diminutive courtiers went into limbo with the last remnants of feudalism. One court, however, continued to give them an asylum, and the small gentleman in question shared the confidence of Isabella with Mafori and the Bleeding Nun, and accompanied her in her hasty flight from the capital.

He left one palace only to find shelter in another. The Queen had laid by for a rainy day, and her Parisian exile was only less splendid than her state in Madrid. He had a suite of apartments in the regal mansion of the Avenue du Roi de Rome, and at a fixed hour every morning he was admitted to the room of his benefactress with the lapdog and the parrot, both brought, like himself with no little difficulty, across the frontier in those trying moments when the Queen had to surrender everything but what was absolutely indispensable to her comfort. He was of use to Her Majesty in a thousand ways, his wit entertained her, and her favourite morning's amusement was to see him make sport of the old ministers who had contributed to her downfall, or of the new ones who were serving the Provisional Government. His speeches *à la Castelar* were highly relished; and he somehow used to contrive to look tall for the purpose of caricaturing the gait and bearing of

Figueras. When the latter undertook his desperate journey to Barcelona, the dwarf made a great hit by appearing before his mistress one day all in red and carrying a puppet (made up in rude imitation of the Republican minister), of which he pulled the strings to symbolize the relations between Figueras and his unwelcome associate, Roque Barcia. The representation was much applauded. Poor Amadeus, who had previously left the country, was, of course, not spared; and the dwarf was peculiarly happy in satirical touches on the solitude in which that king lived, through the refusal of the native nobility to attend his court.

But he was a good deal more than a buffoon—he was a trusted counsellor; and he was really one of the few wire-pullers who shuffled puppet after puppet off the scene at Madrid until the stage was left clear for the entry of Alfonso. He had a sound head and exceptional opportunities of using it to advantage in confidential missions. In this capacity he was invaluable, for he was about the only person, known to have been formerly about the person of Isabella, who was allowed to enter Spain. No one thought of suspecting him—it was only the dwarf, and besides, he had a capital excuse for his presence in the country: he had come to look after his "property," a patch of ground in the neighbourhood of Aranjuez bestowed on him one day in a frolic of good nature by the Queen. He talked much of his estate and of the neglected condition in which it had been left by the fall of the dynasty; and a pretended anxiety

to secure it from confiscation gave him an opportunity of seeing many of the men in power, and of quietly sounding them as to their disposition towards the exiled house. But his chief business lay among the leaders of the Alfonsist party: and he was the most faithful, and the most intelligent of go-betweens for them and for the cabal in Paris. He was as free from molestation from all parties as his colleague the parrot, and he had that bird's gift of accurately repeating whatever was said in his hearing, joined to an intelligence that was all his own. His memory was wonderful: he took no notes, carried no papers, but conveyed the substance of communications from one side to the other without losing a single item of importance on the way. When all was ready, and Alfonso was about to start from Paris, the little man was in high glee with the expectation of being promoted to the King's suite. But the young monarch was sufficiently well-advised to leave as much as possible of his mother's property behind him, in ideas as in personal belongings, and the dwarf was given to understand that, small as he was there would not be room for him in the baggage.

There was another reason for his exclusion: Alfonso simply detested him for the contempt which his influence in the Queen's household tended to bring upon the royal name. He was part of a peculiarly hateful past, and a part out of all proportion to his physical size. He was left in Paris, as the Queen was left, because both would have been highly dangerous companions for a momentous journey. Isabella was nothing loath

to have him with her; she loaded him with favours; and with these and her subsequent gifts he became a rich man. Alfonso would perhaps have been content to have seen both of them for the last time, but he found it impossible in the long run to resist his mother's entreaties for permission to return to Spain. He coupled his assent, however, with one almost intolerable condition: she was to leave the dwarf behind: and there was more negotiation on this article of the family pact which preceded the journey than on all the rest put together. She cried like an infant when she bade her abridgment of a courtier good-bye, and she left him for a consolation the well-filled purse on which he afterwards led the life of a gentleman in the most luxurious capital of Europe.

A half-witted world! If the others are no better, it makes nightmare of the whole cosmic scheme.

## CHAPTER IX

### PROVINCES AND METROPOLE

MANCHESTER was the next stage. I had undertaken responsibilities and I wanted a regular engagement. I found it with *The Manchester Guardian*, then as now among the best, local only in its place of origin, metropolitan and more in its vision, and in its championship of all the great causes, win or lose.

*S'il gagne bataille*
*Aura mes amours.*
*Qu'il gagne, ou qu'il perd*
*Les aura toujours.*

Perhaps the nymph was a prophetess, with such a paper in her mind.

For me it was a great change, from the capital to a great provincial city. It was so different, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse, yet always as a question of limitations. I do not mean in regard to size: Manchester and Salford between them are big enough for anything, but they are still only varieties of the same thing. London is every city, and it mirrors the empire and the world.

It was not always so. The chief provincial cities had to suffice to themselves in politics,

literature, science and art—to take the formula of the old-fashioned weekly papers. "Who made the assembly shine?—Robin Adair!" There *was* an assembly, a social centre. The railways have put an end to all that. Now, if you want a ball or even a party on the big scale, you must come to town for it: it costs less in time and trouble, and even in cash. The distant garrisons run up to London for their regimental dinners. The provinces of the theatrical world once had companies of their own, schools of acting, local stars. The judgment of Manchester has long carried weight in general criticism. Its approval was the starting-point of the brilliant theatrical career of Geneviève Ward. So in art: you had a Manchester school, as you had a Norwich school. The Manchester painters still called themselves a school in my day, but the migration had begun. Glasgow still struggles hard, but its crack hands await the verdict on the banks of the Thames. Manchester with its Brierlys and its Waughs, had its own brand of literature as the Lakes had theirs. They were the writers for the people and about the people: now with the sevenpenny editions, to go no farther, every mill-hand may seek his ministrants in the entire mind of the race. It had above all its school in politics with Bright and Cobden as men of the time.

So it has come to this, if you blow a penny whistle at the Hebrides, to ends of fame or fortune, you must try your luck with it in London town. The essentially Scottish comedian of the music-halls made his name in London, though now,

surpassing even the Christy Minstrels, he never performs out of the planet. The gentry shopped in Manchester, to the glory and profit of ancient firms counting their life by centuries: we know where they shop to-day. Manchester struggled hard for its all-sufficing school of music, with Hallé in the conductor's chair, but it now owns the force of gravitation as exercised at Covent Garden and Queen's Hall. Cobbett was at least prophetic in calling London the Wen: it appropriates all the nutriment of the country to its own uses, diseased ones if you like; but protest is beside the mark.

The local universities are playing their part in a healthier reaction. Owens College was but our academic influence when I first knew the *Guardian:* it might now staff the whole paper in the higher branches. The editor, then as now, was Charles Prestwich Scott. He had passed through Oxford, and gradually brought in some of the Oxford men. Before his day the chief leader writer was Acton, of the University of London. In this respect, however, as just shown, Manchester might easily be sufficient to itself. The same thing might be said, in the same connexion, of the sister universities of Liverpool, Birmingham, Glasgow and other great cities all over the kingdom. They will in time develop a perfect character of their own, perhaps as they learn to specialize less in universality.

Birmingham has made a bold bid for freedom, but it is still a satellite. Since Mr. Chamberlain could not avert that, it is not to be averted, yet

his very success would have intensified the provincial note: London is not the bright particular star, but the firmament. Chamberlain was such a star from first to last: as he waxed or waned in splendour, so did Birmingham with him, in rare subservience to his moods. I remember his mayoralty in his salad days, and the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales, yet to be Edward VII and his Queen. Would he be decently civil to them?—it was a toss up. He stood for the Radical Programme, for ransom as applied to the classes in possession, and for many fine things, that yet await the moon's next visit to the earth. We all trembled, even his own clients. Principles are very well, but when you have a guest under your roof, to say nothing of Royalty, you are under the same obligations as the Arab in his tent. Well, they came, and all the white country of the cotton spinners, with half the black came to see. The whole kingdom heaved a sigh of relief when it heard that he had been "nice" from first to last. His manners were perfect; his decoration of the town was a model; his orchid put all the stars and crosses to shame. He knew what he was about: it was his first step into notice as a governing man.

What Scotland gained by the Union, Edinburgh lost. Think of the days when it was a true capital, with its own Parliament and Parliament men, its own society, and later on its own literary set ruling all Britain from the office of *The Edinburgh Review*, its very *Noctes* a main source of light for the isle. Its Athenian prototype was of course

the supreme case in point. It is the multiplicity of interest that counts; not any one thing by itself, but the all-roundness of them all put together, for the benefit of the all-round man.

There is more of this in the American cities. Each is a centre more or less self-sufficing, and all the sentiment it has to spare goes rather to its sovereign state, than to the larger Union beyond —except of course when the foreigner begins to make remarks.

Wait till Edinburgh and Dublin recover a larger share of political autonomy, and we shall still see great things. If not, we may, as an exercise in pure imagination, amuse ourselves with a vision of the provinces marching on London to the cry of 'ancient lights' and releasing her only upon terms of absolute social independence.

It is difficult to say what one means about the unique character of London without having to say more than one means. First, it is no case of superiority, only one of essential difference. The other great cities serve abundantly to all the reasonable wants of man. Perhaps this is just where the point comes: the unreasonable wants are usually the most urgent. London affords such ample subsistence in fancy and whim, the elements that make for the sense of freedom and fullness of being. All the types of humanity are in her streets and her public places, all their records in her museums, their dreams in her picture galleries, their follies in her shows, their race types in her monster hotels with her docks to follow. Her clubs are not

two or three, one for the county, one for the middle class, a third for the others : they sample the orb. St. James's Street and Pall Mall are only for one section, the ruling class in arts and arms. If you want more or less, give it a name and it can still be found within the radius, down to the cock and hen clubs of the eastern slums.

Then, for all the faiths, consider only the range of her conventicles from the Abbey and St. Paul's to the corrugated roofs and spires of the Salvation Army, done at a price. All the insurrections of belief are housed elsewhere, if not, they still make shift with the street corners and the parks. Bagdad of the caliphs is child's play to it for the variety of life. For vice in its frolic hour, and in its attribution to the wicked foreigner, Soho may serve, and for a deeper shade you have but to cross the street to the *hinterland* of Tottenham Court Road. A modern Balzac might die of the impossibility of writing a line, for excess of material. His Comédie Humaine would be but a curtain-raiser now. *Quicquid agunt homines*— what a proud boast, and what a laughable one when one thinks how much Mr. Bickerstaff and his merry men had perforce to miss. The smaller cities miss most of it, through being so effectually policed. You cannot police London, and the constable shows his sense of it by toying with nuts on his beat. Every day some fifty thousand pleasure seekers of every tribe of civilization are dumped into it, simply to see the sights. It would be distracting enough to send them all to the lunatic asylums by nightfall, if they had time to

give it a thought. Therein lies its magic: the call of London is the call of a syren of a thousand wiles.

In France local independence counts for more, as a compensation for excess of administrative control. The chief place of the department has usually its cathedral, always its public library, museum, art gallery. The *prefect* is there, a great civil officer, with his staff. The garrison is generally hard by, and this brings in the military, if only as partners at the dances. The University is there; even its professors have their social uses. The Cathedral chapter is not to be forgotten. The magnates of commerce and industry rank as powers with the rest. In such societies a writer like Anatole France has his opportunity. They are organic, whatever else they are not: this marks the main difference between French and English cities of the same standing. If there had been such a true social unit in Manchester when they were building the town hall, that magnificent structure would have had a suitable site. As it is, it lies hid in its back square hardly with breathing room for its inmates, certainly with no room for their elbows. That crime was the work of a knot of intriguers, some with properties to sell, others out for a victory against common sense, for the fun of the thing, perhaps the most corrupt of all motives in public affairs. There was the site waiting in the great square, then dowered with a hideous infirmary that might easily, and in every way beneficially, have been removed to the fine open country outside. In France

organized public opinion would have put the factions to shame. It is hard to create masterpieces of architecture at a pinch, but for how many years after Manchester's elevation to a bishopric was its cathedral still but a transmogrified parish church. Liverpool is doing better in cathedrals, has always done better—compare the two town halls for elevations and for pride of place—because Liverpool as an organism, has more of the all sorts that go to make a world. For still one more example, look at the fine Rylands library of Manchester, and then consider its site.

But what the large cities lose in variety of interest they gain in concentration of character. Manchester was a pleasant place to live in, as soon as you left the streets for the houses. If you had fewer acquaintances, you had more friends. The walls glowed with pictures, all well-meaning if not all good, and charming as a scheme of decoration. It was the period of the lavish outlay on art, as a fancy and as an investment combined. The nation was in the full tide of prosperity: there was money waiting for profitable use, and it went experimentally into masterpieces of the modern school. Some demon that many mistook for an angel of light whispered to Manchester "have a taste." It was decided that the taste should be pictures. Here again London had led the way with art as a fashion, and Picture Sunday as the day of days for the year. There was no dropping in about it: the invitations were issued weeks in advance, and where they were not offered, they were sought. The

old masters still held their ground for lip service, but they were not plentiful enough to meet the demand.

The Manchester man who had just done well on 'Change took his favourite picture dealer's on the way home to repeat the stroke. His business, in the one place, was to know all about coming cargoes, and, in the other, about coming men. The dealer was there to advise, with the full assurance of a fortune for his share of the transaction, and of good pickings for his workman with the brush. You bought at a stiff price to stimulate the sense of luck in the purchase, and four figures were the almost invariable rule. The idea was that you had better make haste about it, or they would soon be five. In that expectation many invested in pictures as they might have invested in diamonds, confident of the rise, and put them on the same footing as money, land, or houses in their wills.

This went on until heirs began to realize, with sore disappointment in lieu of the expected portion. The new master instead of proving a second Gainsborough or Constable became a mere Dick Tinto who had been found out. The full exposure, of course, did not come all at once. It was a matter of time, but its progress was steady, and when it was complete artists went into the simple life of bankruptcy as fast as the victims of a South Sea bubble. Some died of the change; others, perhaps less fortunate, lived on only to see their pictures laughed out of the auction rooms, at prices that would hardly pay for the frames. It

was all too foolish and so unnecessary. The John Edward Taylor sale showed what a good investment good art might be, when the investor was also his own connoisseur.

Then came the demand, which has lasted to our time, for old masters of our own schools who had stood the test of experience. New ones, even in this line, had to be discovered to meet the rush : Raeburn had his turn at last. They, in turn, became the objects of an equally fatuous inflation, perhaps to end in a second disappointment, for you may still pay too dear for your whistle, though a whistle of worth.

Much the same thing has gone on in France. Millet, who lived and died in a cottage with ground for the floor, realized fabulous prices, not for his heirs, worse luck ! but only for the dealers who had stocked him in his hour of need. It was Millet who said :—"The trees talk to each other. I'm sure of it. I can't tell you what they're saying, but I know they are not making puns." High-water mark was reached here with an Angelus changing hands at something like twenty thousand sterling, with rival dealers mopping their brows as they toiled to that figure by five-hundred-pound bids. It was the same, to some extent, with father Corot, though he lived to net enough for the satisfaction of his heroically simple wants. There was, however, less disappointment in the long run, because in matters of this sort the French are not so easily deceived. Their second and their third best men, who had been made to rank as first raters, took their proper place, and the

practice of booming for the rise came sooner to its inevitable end.

The authority of our picture dealer over his customer in his hey-day was one of the strangest things. It was quite spiritual in its nature. The man who could hold his own with the best on 'Change became as a child when he passed into the show-rooms. The very shopman was almost his priestly guide. He took charge of him, led him round the gallery and told him what he really wanted to buy. It was almost hypnotic in its power of suggestion. The choice of course was always in favour of the stocks on hand. Two or three names were in vogue at a time, and the client was given to understand by many a hint freely garnished with the current cant of criticism that he had better secure his bargain at once. His social vanity helped to effect his ruin. His neighbour and friendly rival in such acquisitions had secured a masterpiece of the moment, and here was a providential chance of getting something by the same sure hand. In this way some bought simply for ostentation, and without a thought of gain. Collectors must be in the fashion like other people, and it is peculiarly hard to have to look foolish on your own hearth. The dealers themselves no doubt often acted in perfect good faith: they might have used Johnson's plea:—ignorance, sheer ignorance! But the faith of their victims became a positive superstition. In one case I remember a certain picture was the Naboth's vineyard to a friend of the owner: he yearned for it. "Will you part with it?" he asked. "Well,

no, but if ever I do you can have it at cost price." It was loyally offered in that way some time after, but the other now fought shy. It was then rebought by a dealer, and soon resold at a handsome profit to the very man who had declined it. He mistrusted his own judgment, and he cheerfully paid the extra price to have it confirmed by a shopwalker.

## CHAPTER X

### REPUBLICAN FRANCE

MY cockney craving for a capital led me again to Paris. I resigned at the *Guardian*, and made the great venture—for the moment on but slender encouragement in assured work.

I took an apartment in the *Rue Galilée* by the *Arc de Triomphe*, and, armed with a few introductions, set out on the pleasant task of spying the richness of the land from the point of view of a settler. France was rising to her feet again, after the war; and, while retaining their cut and fashion, sending all her institutions to the repairing shop. It was a great opportunity for the correspondent who was worth his salt. But I was no correspondent as yet, only an outsider, waiting for an opening, a very different thing. The men on the establishments were few, and they ranked as the heads of their branch of the calling.

Everything was now in a state of change, the foreign correspondence with the rest. The men in possession were of what I may call the middle period. I had profited much before starting by the counsels of my old friend, John Fraser Corkran, who had retired to London after a long residence in France. He had represented *The Morning Herald*, in Paris, for years, and was the type

and model of the great correspondents of the old school. His wife, a woman of stately beauty and wide literary culture, had in her *salon*, taken charge of the social part of his work. They were of the first great period—the reign of Louis Philippe, the Republic of 1848, the *coup d'état* and the Second Empire. Victor Hugo had come up in literature —he was a peer of France of the Liberal Monarchy —Alfred de Vigny was going down, much to his disgust, Lamartine had fretted his hour on the stage of politics, Balzac was still busy. All were of Mrs. Corkran's circle in the French capital not as celebrities to be interviewed, but as friends by the fireside. Thackeray was their closest intimate, the fairy godfather of their children, the man who found the knife and fork always ready for the happy chance of his company at a meal. He was still brooding over big work while taking his luck with the trifles that came to hand. One day he had this to say to his hosts: "I think I'm safe for a good second rate at last."—*Vanity Fair* was in the printer's hands.

At that time no correspondent used the telegraph wire; I doubt if there was one to use. They wrote long letters hot with the impression of things seen and lived, and where there was need of haste, they hired post-chaises, and set off for Calais on their own account, to catch the mail boat. It was a matter of days and nights of ceaseless travel, of reckless and lavish bargains with the post-houses on the road, of neck-and-neck races in genial rivalry for the chance of a first bid for the last relay left in the stable, each flourishing a

mocking farewell to the other with his packet, as he forged ahead. On the road back they shared the victor's chaise, with frequent halts for an omelette and a bottle in the old inns of old towns —the best chums in the world. In this way they often beat the official couriers from the embassies, and gave Downing Street itself first news, with many warm acknowledgments in return.

Much of this had changed when I went back to Paris : the wire had come to town, but only as a luxury in scrappy messages. Its use, even in that way, carried with it such a sense of daring novelty, and of profanely expressed contempt for the expenses, that *The Daily Telegraph* made its first *coup* with its title. The letters were still written, but they were sent by post, and over and above that they were written at the *café* in lieu of an office. The correspondent actually rented a whole table to himself at a place within easy reach of the central post, and his myrmidons came and went, with last items of news to fill the fat envelope to the bursting point, up to the last minute of the last quarter of an hour.

The third and final change came with the correspondent's office, also at times his place of residence, in some spacious suite of rooms, with the title of the paper in huge gilt letters on his balcony, as a bye-product of advertisement for the world at large. *The Daily Telegraph* set this fashion, at a corner of the Boulevard and the *Place de l'Opéra*. *The Standard* followed the example at the corner opposite, *The Daily News* was near in the *rue du Quatre Septembre*. In point of style,

it was a great improvement on the old system of a business address no better than '*Café de la Providence*, first table on the left.' The correspondent could now receive in state. He was no longer obliged to go to the ministries for his news; they often came to him, and were admitted only on formalities as solemn as their own. A man in black answered the bell, led the way to the waiting-room, and came back to relieve the tension of expectancy with a 'not at home' or 'will you walk this way?' The very furniture grew impressive as you neared the shrine: you felt that you were in the inner sanctum of a department of state. To this period belonged the great Blöwitz of *The Times*, Campbell Clarke of *The Telegraph*, and the Crawfords of *The Daily News*.

I can only treat the last as a dual personality, for Mrs. Crawford was to the full as important, to put it mildly, as the man who had given her the name by which she was so widely known. As a matter of fact, towards the last, she was the correspondent and the correspondence. She had extraordinary facility with the pen. She wrote with *malice* in the French sense, that is to say with humour, dash and point. The sex attributes of mind, as commonly generalized, seemed to have changed: hers was the will behind the instrument, the address, the energy, the power to face the world. Under growing infirmities, his part declined to the practice of the domestic virtues. He was a dignified gentlemanlike person who had been a good hand in his day, but that day was gone; and since he could no longer fill the

part of the new man of the period, it was filled for him in their common interest by his partner, as the new woman. For *The Daily News* she wrote one kind of political letter befitting the gravity of the subject, and for *Truth* quite another, a perfect storehouse of the anecdote of the day as it bore on the drama of public life. She knew all the leading men, especially on the Republican side: Gambetta was often to be met at her luncheon table. With this, she produced endless articles for the reviews British and American, and I think had another correspondence for a New York paper. It was an all-devouring activity. Some of the work had the blemishes of haste, none of it was less than workmanlike. There was a powerful mind behind it, too often doing less than justice to itself, but—one must live! A chance word of hers once put me on the track of an estimate of character in a common friend, at which I had been tinkering for years. She was handsome, but in a mannish way—a big, powerful head, lips apt for a smile or a resolve, a solid block of brow, with sparkling Irish eyes to light its recesses with promise of good fellowship and entertainment. As she advanced in age she looked like a *marquise* of the old school, with a mass of silvery white hair—warranted natural—for the indispensable effect of the peruke.

In her husband's interest she fought the great Blöwitz in a struggle for the primacy of the Press gallery at the Assembly. In their relations with the questor of that body the correspondents were represented by Crawford, appointed by the suffrages

of his colleagues. Blöwitz sighed for the post, and began to make interest with the little constituency for the next sessional election. Crawford's prospects looked poor, but when the lady entered into the fray, they soon improved. She interviewed the authorities, she wrought by turns on the hopes and fears of the constituency, she stuck at nothing, and she won. The great one bated no jot of grandeur in defeat. When he saw how things were going, he took care to cast his vote on the winning side, with compliments addressed to the hearts of his supporters by inference at the expense of their heads. Hely Bowes of *The Standard* took another pinch of snuff and proposed a dinner of reconciliation; Campbell Clarke assented with the smile that probably clung to him even in his dreams.

France was once more in the fullest activity of all her energies. While the statesmen shaped her government, brought the army back to life, and began to educate her people, others were at work on the reconstruction of the *salon* on a Republican basis. They found their leader in another remarkable woman, Juliette Lamber, the pen name of Madame Adam.

If Madame Bonaparte-Patterson had lived to know Juliette Lamber she would not have despaired of republicanism as a means of social success. The latter was rich, charming, and she kept open house for the republic in her drawing-room in the Boulevard Poissonnière—of all places in the world. She might almost be said to have revived the *salon;* for what with the war and the change of

manners, that essentially French institution had long been in a languishing state. She certainly revived it in the interest of the new *régime* and so trumped the last card of monarchical reaction. The Legitimists said that you could never have a *salon* without an aristocracy; the Orleanists, that you could never have it without wealth as well; and of course both implied that you need not look for wealth or birth outside their ranks. Madame Adam had one at least of these qualifications: her second husband, the Senator, was a Republican when it was rather a bold thing for a man of means to wear the badge of that party. He was at Gambetta's side in the darkest hours of the war; and when he died he left his political faith to his wife. The other part of the heritage consisted of some odd millions of francs. People came to her to talk politics, art, literature; and that of course was her *salon* in the germ.

She began in a small way, soon after the close of the Communist troubles, and little by little her house became a sort of antechamber of Parliament. There were two conditions of entry; position, and I was going to say, faith in the new constitution, but that is hardly exact. If you could not bless the existing form of government, you had at least to refrain from doing the other thing. As time wore on she exercised a large hospitality, and was better able to dictate terms.

But this anticipates: there were moments when she kept a social conventicle for republicans almost at the risk of her personal safety. A night or so after Marshal MacMahon's *coup* known as *The*

*Sixteenth of May*, a few men gathered in her rooms with every prospect, as they thought, of being hurried off to gaol when they reached the street. Louis Blanc, Gambetta, Girardin were of the number. It was a moment of the wildest rumours: every newcomer had his story of the intention of the Broglie Cabinet to make a clean sweep of the party. One had heard from a friend in the Ministry of the Interior that the list of proscription had been drawn up. Another had seen the police waiting at the doors of the destined victims. All this was a little absurd, perhaps—so was the talk of the hunted beasts in the fable—but we must remember that many of Madame Adam's guests had felt the teeth of the trap in the time of Louis Napoleon. Louis Blanc was one of the few who declared there was nothing in the new scare. He demonstrated logically that there could not be another *coup d'état*, as circumstances had changed. The Man of December succeeded because the Assembly was unpopular; the present Assembly being popular, MacMahon would have no chance. The logician was right: for once in a way, the circumstances had listened to reason. When Gambetta left about midnight, the others, at the bidding of their hostess, saw him safe home. At a dinner given at her house some time after he proposed her health in highly eulogistic terms, as one who had been the friend of the republic in adversity, and who would be its ornament in its brighter hour.

It was a *salon* of the *bourgeoisie* of course, but that was its strength on one side, if its weakness

elsewhere. The republic was no longer to be identified with mob rule. People began to go to her for what they could get, a sure sign of power: her friendship was the short cut to a prefecture, for ministers were understood to be at her beck and call. Of the many women fit to bear them company few were allowed to cross the threshold. She managed to do without them for awhile: she had some taste in art, and her skill in literature was attested by many clever books. Gradually her house won the repute of a place where you met everybody who was in the movement. I recall a few figures—Gambetta—till he gave it up on the conviction that one leader of the party was enough, and that if the lady continued her patronage, there would be two—Freycinet, Léon Say, Galliffet, Lesseps, Girardin, Edmond About, Flaubert, Turguenieff, Leconte de Lisle, Bonnat, Bastien Lepage, all of them now but ghosts I have met.

*La Nouvelle Revue* had its birth in this *salon*. It was to be the organ of the young republic in periodical literature. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* had become fossilized. Every number seemed to have been dipped in the fountain at Vichy that turns everything to stone. It was Orleanist in its origin and it is still far from being frankly Republican to-day. With its aid Madame Adam "arrived" in the fullest sense of the term.

What a change! She began life as a sort of uncertified assistant to her father, a country doctor; then she was given in marriage to the village notary, much her senior; and eventually,

finding both the notary and the village insupportable, she went to Paris to live by her pen. She had some reading, more wit, and still more feeling, for her stock-in-trade. The feeling stood her in best stead. Proudhon had delivered an attack on women in the form of certain *Idées* eminently uncomplimentary to the sex. Juliette Lamber read it with indignation, and replied to it with spirit. Her *Idées Anti-Proudhoniennes* contended, in a series of happy paradoxes, for the perfect equality of woman. The book at once attracted the flattering notice of George Sand, and from that moment Juliette Lamber was "launched." The two formed a friendship only severed by death; and the younger rapidly produced volume after volume which showed that she had not known the author of *Indiana* in vain. She wrote on many subjects, but a passionate vindication of the claims of women, as these are understood in France, was always her main theme.

She threw herself into the new enterprise with her accustomed ardour. Her time was laid out with scientific precision: she rose early to read manuscript, to receive contributors, to dictate to secretaries. She saw her milliner at breakfast, and despatched the meal and her orders together, avoiding all waste of time in trying on her own garments, by criticizing their fit on a dummy moulded exactly to her shape. The work went on till it was time for the afternoon drive, and dinner, followed by the party or the play. The small hours often found her once more at her desk. A short break of fitful slumber divided day from day of

this convict toil. Of course it did not last long: there came a time when her doctor offered her the alternative of rest or death. It produced less effect than he expected; but when he threatened her with the loss of her good looks she at once gave way. She still kept a part of the review to herself, especially devoted to the smashing up of Prince Bismarck, and she dreamed even of forming a kind of social counterpoise to his league of the three empires. She undertook missions of her own to Rome, to Vienna, to Buda-Pesth, to Petersburg, wherever she saw a chance of doing her enemy an ill turn. It was the boudoir against the Chancellor's cabinet; and unequal as the contest looks and was, the former sometimes contrived to score. At Petersburg she met the impressionable Skobeleff, and he was not the man to suffer her departure to put an end to their acquaintance. He was soon in Paris; and he had not long frequented her *salon* when he indulged in a furious outburst against Germany, and, by implication, the alliance that was the darling project of the Chancellor's life—with what ultimate effect, we have lately seen. He was instantly ordered home by his anxious master, but the mischief was done. It was easier to recall him than to recall his words, which seemed to pledge the nation, of which he was the hero, and its whole military caste, to undying hostility to the German name.

It pleased her to think that Bismarck stood in awe of her, and that he always ran through his copy of her review to the cry of 'that woman! that woman!' and tore out what was left of his hair.

She had her ups and downs with her own people of Paris. At one time they gave her a street to her name—Rue Juliette Lamber, by the fortifications. At another time, in the course of a tiff, they took it away from her, eventually, I believe, making amends by its restoration. It is a way they have. In the course of the Franco-German war, when General Uhrich began his gallant defence of Strasburg, no honour of this sort was too high for him. With the first reports of his successes he had his Rue Uhrich as a matter of course. As things still improved (in the papers) he was promoted to an avenue, and presently he rose to a boulevard. But he had hardly reached it when the luck began to turn. The Germans captured a fort, and with that the General lost his boulevard, and was put back one to his avenue. As matters went from bad to worse, he lost even this in its turn, until once more he had nothing to his name but the street with which he set out on his career of glory. The news of the capitulation I believe stripped him even of that, for a time, if not for ever.

## CHAPTER XI

### KING VICTOR HUGO

REPUBLIC if you like, but still with Hugo for its uncrowned king, by virtue alike of his genius and of his long record of success without a break. He had gone into exile after the *coup d'état;* the overthrow of the empire naturally restored him to the throne of literature in his good city of Paris. A mighty writer, from his youth he had scaled the highest peaks of glowing rhetoric ever achieved by man. He was of the very few who have never known what it is to be other than famous: in his teens he was the *enfant sublime* of the apostrophe of Chateaubriand. Yet there was something wanting in him, for all that. He was another Timotheus of the Dryden ode: he could touch to any mood he pleased, though he might have been poor company for the actual contact with life. Yet in this defect he was perhaps more truly himself, more truly the artist. The word of power rarely carries with it the knack of the deed: the artificers of the emotion seem quite a class apart. I was greatly tickled once by an obscure entry in the Paris directory:—"So and So—Maker of Batons for the Marshals of France." Is your poet's function as humble as that?

He is best seen, I think, if not always seen

at his best, in the volume on his grandchildren George and Jeanne — George, to Anglicize it, Jeanne, to let it alone—the weakness of his old age. The French public that humoured him in every foible was more than indulgent in this. Wherever he went, it was understood the children must go also. They were all that was left to bind him to the most beautiful part of his past. Glory he might still have, but without these children there would have been none of his own race to receive or return his caress in old age. His sons had passed away, not before one of them, Charles, had given high promise as a man of letters. He left his two children and his widow to the care of the grandfather; and from that moment the old man and the boy and girl were virtually inseparable. These precocious charges shared his public triumphs, before they were quite old enough to leave his knee without help. George was hardly out of the nursery when he supped with actresses. It was not quite so compromising as it seems: a hundred others were at the board; and they met to celebrate the revival of *Ruy Blas*. Jeanne had seen a whole population almost delirious with joy under her windows; but it was only because she sat nestling up to her grandfather, when all Paris turned out to celebrate his last birthday but one. There was another side to the picture: as Hugo was king, these children were no strangers to the boredom of royalty. Homage was all very well, but sometimes it stood between them and their tops and dolls. It was unpleasant to be dogged by reporters if you went only so far as the *Grand*

*Magasin du Louvre* for a New Year's toy. It was impossible to be always equal to the occasion, when you were expected to behave as the grandchildren of The Light of France. There were moments when the infant pair felt an irresistible temptation to look stupid; and it was evidently a relief to them when they grew too old to be caught and cuddled for purposes of affectionate display. To the last the old poet's hands would feel for them among the crowd at his receptions, even when he was not quite sure on whom they would fall. But George would straighten his high collar, and Jeanne smooth her long frock as they slipped out of reach.

For them Hugo wrote, or to them he dedicated, his volume on *The Art of Being a Grandfather*. It was quite simple: you had only to spoil your grandchildren. The spoiling began early; there are verses to Jeanne at Guernsey, in the time of exile. It is her entry into his song, and, in free translation, it is so entitled. She is talking to herself—to herself and to a few passing acquaintance, namely the sea, the woods, the mists, the flowers, the firmament. What is she saying? Who knows? But it seems satisfactory, for it ends with a smile. "The Other One" is soon called to his side, and soon again he is bending over both, as they lie asleep, and is accounting for the fact that the arms of Jeanne are not in evidence, on the supposition that she is still half wings. He has seen everything, and he too is able to say that all is vanity —all but love and a nest.

Next morning their voices will be the first to

reach him through the open window. A little later, George will be shaking the sawdust out of one of his puppets to discover the anatomical cause of an injury to the springs; and still later the whole thing will be transferred to Hugo, with a piece of twine, for immediate repair. Whatever it pleases them to order, he must do. At three Jeanne gives him clearly to understand that there must be no nonsense when she appears before him in the all-conquering brightness of her new frock. He yields at once, acknowledging her as "*ma contemplation, mon parfum, mon ivresse*"; and when, some time after, he hears that she is in solitary confinement on dry bread, for a breach of domestic law, he steals at once to her cell with a pot of preserve. This is too much for the powers charged with the salvation of society in the immediate neighbourhood of his hearthstone, and their voices are loud in complaint.

The child knows you! you'll ruin her—laughing every time we frown! You upset everything!

It is all too true; and he has just enough grace left to take the lesson to heart.

Put me in her place.

You deserve it certainly.

"If they do," whispers the infant from her corner, "I will bring you some jam."

Was it always like that? One hopes not for the writer's even more than for the children's sake: the poem was at once the child of his old age, and the childishness. The spoiling was hardly a success in its results, to judge by certain not very edifying family quarrels that took place when the

young people attained to what sometimes failed to be years of discretion. Perhaps they found the obscurity of the new life as wearisome as the glitter of the old.

When he returned to Paris, every stranger who had the slightest title to his regard, and many who had not, sought him out. In one aspect, he was a kind of pope of democracy in the abstract, though in his day he had dearly loved to be a lord; and the pilgrimage for his benediction was quite a ceremony. On his return from exile, he at first lived in the Rue de Clichy, and it was understood that the temple of his abode was open to worshippers every night for a service often running into the small hours. The very slightest introduction would do, and even no introduction at all. It was rather disappointing for most worshippers, especially for those from abroad, who expected to find a writer of Hugo's success and reputed wealth living in a fine house. You had to mount two or three flights of stairs to reach the shrine. The door was opened by the cook in her apron, who led you along a narrow passage past her kitchen into an ante-room. If you came before ten, you had to wait. He took his dinner quite as seriously as his poetry, and besides he had to think of his guests of honour at the board. The waiting-room perhaps was better for the study of character. There you might be pretty sure to find the venerable innkeeper of Jersey who had stood up for him when he got into trouble in that island for a hasty word, or the raw correspondent just arrived, or the political conspirator—nationality and even politics

no object—or the enthusiastic young person with her album under her arm. The foreign poet, of course, was rarely to seek—the man with a volume of verse and a special dedication primed for a point-blank discharge.

By and by each had his opportunity. There was a stir in the adjoining room, and no chamberlain was needed to announce—"the King!" You rose and linked up for the circle, while the old man passed round, peering with his failing eyesight into every face, and if he failed to recognize it, still saving himself by his ready tongue, which could have excited the sense of gratified vanity in an image of stone. Then all were invited to follow him into the drawing-room, which in taste was the ante-room intensified—a hotch-potch of curiosities from Europe and the East, arranged by the host himself. By way of being everything, he was his own upholsterer. Here you joined the people who had dined, led by Madame Lockroy, the mother of George and Jeanne, and now, by a second marriage, the wife of the well-known deputy. Paul Meurice, the writer, almost as aged as Hugo, was sure to be in attendance, as manager of all the master's business affairs. Young Coppée, the poet, was often at hand; and sometimes the scene was graced by Renan, Leconte de Lisle, and other men of that literary rank.

Then came the ritual of the occasion, the high function, the blessing of His Holiness, as the Pope of letters. The poet with the dedication, the nymph with the album, or the foreign patriot advanced in turn, by invitation, to share the

pontifical seat on a small sofa that just held two, and to pour their several tributes of flattery into his ear, returned in kind with a flow of sentiment steeped as in the oils of unction. His urbanity and desire to please never failed; the one easy condition was a return in kind. While this was going on, the inner circle of family and friends kept strictly to themselves. It was partly in self-defence; so many new people came every week that it was impossible to keep account of them, but partly also because they did not know better. Their mode of receiving was essentially old-fashioned. In certain ranks in France people keep much apart on these occasions, the ladies on one side of the room, the men on the other; and the breaking of any fresh ground in social intimacy is understood to be a serious thing.

One thing was forgotten, in all this—that the host was not made of cast iron. Hugo was a very old man, and the frequent receptions following the dinner soon proved too much for him. His family took counsel together, removed him from the centre to the circumference of the city, and shortened the hours of hospitality: it was now all lights out by twelve. He exchanged the old stuffy apartment for a roomy house and a garden, and the change tended altogether to the improvement of his health.

He was an extraordinary mixture of diverse qualities good and bad. His life of exile in the Channel Islands was rather a disappointment for even some of his worshippers—in the vast sweep of its contemplations of nature, man, and God,

from the cliff tops, and the poverty of soul in its life of the home. Madame Hugo was left alone to anatomize the melancholy of her deserted hearthstone, while he led the throng of worshippers to the *soirées* of a rival, in an establishment over the way. There was much to be said on both sides, but the situation was one that would have gone far to break the heart of a poet who happened to have much personal use for his own aspirations.

The rival accompanied him to Paris for his triumphant return. A silver-haired valetudinarian of the apartment of the Rue de Clichy, was all that was left of the beautiful actress who had created some parts in his plays.

He died as he had lived, in the limelight, and to the very last with his unmatchable sense of the *scène à faire*. His will decreed that he should be buried, like the poorest of the poor, in a deal coffin, and left it there. The Government of course placed the coffin under the *Arc de l'Étoile*, and draped it with the spoil of the Lyons looms. The funeral surpassed the pomp of royalty. The poverty of the shell, in its contrast with the splendour of its trappings, was the supreme triumph of the antithesis in which he excelled. The body lay there all night in the glare of thousands of torches that must have made the very skies wonder what was afoot below. Regiments with bowed heads kept the vigil, the garrison of Paris turned out to escort him to the grave or keep the line. He died "warm" enough to have treated himself to a coffin of oak: after providing handsomely for his relations, he was able to leave

twenty-thousand francs to the poor. Unfortunately he forgot to sign the codicil.

Does it come to this—the poet, only for the poem, the other man for the act and deed; the orator with a bias for the rear of battle, and on bad terms with his shield? Or does it demand a wholly new estimate of the value of the oration and the song? Are great men to be reckoned with only in their works, not in their lives? Even then, some of them might hardly bear the test, if the works were taken in their entirety. The Wagner of the great tetralogy in one thing, the Wagner of the lampoon on the starving Paris of the siege is quite another. He never forgave the French an early indifference to his music which was shared wellnigh by all the world. When the war came, he took a base revenge in a skit on their miseries, which makes poor reading after the rhapsodies of the Ring, and yet belongs to the all-round view of the man. It was in the form of a little drama called *The Capitulation: A Comedy after the Antique*, and—to do Germany justice—it was rapidly falling into oblivion in the country of its origin, when the vengeful industry of M. Tissot, the author of *Le Pays des Milliards*, unearthed it to form a chapter of that popular work. It may still bear summary quotation here, as an example of the literature of hatred and all uncharitableness, not to say of the crass stupidity, that makes wars.

The scene represents the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville. In its midst rises the altar of the Republic, ornamented with caps of liberty, and, in the rear, a balcony—all that is left of the civic edifice. In

the foreground are the colossal statues of Strasburg and of Metz. A new kind of prompter's box, with the aperture turned towards the public, is placed in front of the altar.

Victor Hugo emerges from this opening as from a subterranean. He wipes his forehead and looks around.

Ah, at last I breathe thee, air of the sacred city. And how have I come? By the sewers. In following them I have struck the true path of civilization. Yes, I am here, and *not* by way of the Prussian lines. But what is this above my head? a gibbet, no; a scaffold—perhaps a holy guillotine? Where is the Hôtel de Ville?

*Faint voices from below the stage.* Victor, Victor, be one of us.

*Hugo.* What's that? Who calls me back into the sewers?

He tries to leave the sewer to join the National Guards, but he is held firmly by the heels below. The guards take him by the hand, and each side pulls until his body stretches like an elastic band —Wagner trying to be lively.—Suddenly he is contracted by a violent start of anguish. The guards lose hold; he sinks and disappears.

*Chorus.* The devil has him.

*Commandant.* Silence—Wake the Government.

*Chorus* (singing):

*General Trochu, le Galérien*
*Que fait il au Mont Valérien?*
*Gouvernement! Bombardement!*
*Bombardement! Gouvernement!*
*Gouvernement! Gouvernement! Gouvernement!—ment'!—ment!*

They are still disputing when Nadar appears, clad in a limp balloon, to the great terror of the spectators. He announces himself as the saviour of the republic; he is ready to pass the Prussian lines. Gambetta, who has taken refuge under the table, plucks up courage, creeps forth, and insists on sharing the adventure. The chorus applauds. The dress of the aeronaut is inflated by the breath of the citizens; he mounts, and surveys the world —a cheering spectacle. All Europe is preparing to intervene in favour of France—in England 'the Lords and Commons,' here the Russians, the Poles and the Cossacks; there the Spaniards, the Portuguese and the Jews. (A note by the translator explains that Wagner is the deadly enemy of this race, and has written a pamphlet against their composers.)

While this is going on above the earth, the delighted spectators hear a strange noise—as of the clashing of kettles—from below, which serves as an accompaniment to the chant of the spirits of the sewers.

A chorus and a ballet follow, and the curtain falls on the apotheosis of Victor Hugo amid Bengal fires.

Piteously, gross and foolish no doubt, though years after its publication in Paris, the memory of it still rankled in the French mind, and the first attempt to introduce the Wagner music at the Pasdeloup concerts nearly led to a riot.

## CHAPTER XII

### A RUSSIAN REALIST

I HAD kept up relations with the New York *World*, and as the result of some experimental letters I became its resident correspondent in Paris. I worked my way in by sending them what I thought their people wanted, when it also happened to be what I wanted to write: one must think a little of one's fellow creatures, after all. This I have always found the best of introductions. The work alone must do it in the main, and editors who know their business are naturally of that way of thinking too. Paris, and a paper ready to let me say my say in it! What more could I need?

About this time I began to know Verestchagin, the Russian painter. He had a studio at Maisons-Laffitte, a few miles from Paris. I soon came to know him quite well, for he invited study. In regard, at least to his native Russia, he was not one, but all mankind's epitome. All the racial strains were in him, with perhaps a little too much of the Tartar for the perfect harmony. At times he seemed quite a freshman from the wilds—sudden and quick in quarrel, snapshot in judgment, bitter in blame, and rather contemptuous

of the " manners and customs of modern society," though he could hold his own there when he liked. He was at once candid and crafty, yet both without hypocrisy. When he spoke, it was often to rap out his thought about you or your proceedings with the most engaging frankness; when he held his tongue, you had nobody to thank but yourself if he got the better of you: there was no false pretence. When he gave his trust it was wholeheartedly: he had great faith in the English word. It is not an amiable character, neither is that of Bazarof in Turguenieff's *Fathers and Sons*, but it is very Russian. Geniality was not in the composition, but there was much else that was downright good.

He was a great illustrator, rather than an artist, with sheer reality for his end and aim. His pictures were human documents in oils, that and nothing else: the naked truth without phrase. So are those of his countryman Repnin. Look at the latter's peasants of the Volga towing the barge; nothing picturesque about them, mere human beasts of burden with centuries of inbreeding in misery and privation in every brutish face. Gorki in literature strikes the same note, with others quite too numerous to mention in both kinds. It is brush and pen in the service of social upheaval, as once they were in the service of religion.

He came of good family and was educated for the navy, but he slipped out of that to get his training in art at Munich and in the Paris schools. He became the most mercilessly truthful painter

of war I think the world has ever seen. How he laughed at Horace Vernet, and his whole set. "Do you call that war—these spick-and-span generals prancing on circus hacks, these clouds of smoke to hide the horrors, these 'moments of victory' focussed for stage effect?" His pet aversion in this line was Vernet's standardized study of Napoleon crossing the Alps. Even the august Meissonier was not spared for the unreality of his snow, in the "1812":—"I wonder if he has ever seen such a thing." He was of Byron's mind:—"war's a brain-spattering, windpipe-slitting art." He photographed nature with an eye that was truer than the lens, and he never asked her to look pleasant. He was in Central Asia for the campaign of the Khanates, and had the glories of the mosques of Samarkand for his backgrounds, and for the main business a welter of blood. No other man of his time had such a sure touch for character in race types—Tartars in their mansions of felt, far exceeding the scale of the tent, Afghans, manifestly but Jews of the lost tribes, cornered at last, begging dervishes, all rags fat and filth, Kirghiz swells with hawk and hound.

He did British India in just the same way, from the caves of Ellora to the temples, with their priests, deities, monsters thrown in. Then, going out of his beat of things seen, he imagined the Mutiny with the sun streaming down on rebels tied to their guns, and ready to go up as manhood, and come down as rain. His appetite for horrors was positively insatiable, and he found a fresh

crop in the Russo-Turkish war. Here, as often before, he took a share in the fighting, for patriotism, as he put it to himself, but I fancy only as a sop to the old Adam that was deep down in his nature. He went out with a torpedo boat and tried to sky a Turkish ship in the Danube, missed it, and was nearly killed for his pains by the fire from the decks. He liked fighting for its own sake : the purpose in painting it was still but the afterthought. It fascinated him as crime fascinated Dostoieffsky. Certainly you came away from his work with a disgust for slaughter, and certainly he always told the truth about it free from patriotic bias.

His *All Quiet at Shipka* was the story of that dreadful winter in the Pass—scene 1, the Russian sentry trotting up and down to keep himself alive ; scene 2, the same, numbed and yielding to the sleep hunger ; scene 3, a snow-covered mound where there was once a man, with the stock phrase of the despatches for his epitaph. He saw the great assault on Plevna when a hundred thousand men were hurled at the Turkish entrenchments, in a fatuous attempt to offer the fortress as a birthday gift to the Tsar. This and its sequel, lines and lines of the Russian dead lying in their shallow graves to await the blessing of the priests, or, worse still, a vast acreage of the living writhing in every contortion of agony under a broiling sun. The birthday scene bore an ironical significance that was the most appalling of all. The assault is at its hottest in the valley ; and on a hill top, quite out of harm's way, sits the Tsar and Little

Father of his people, in his arm-chair, watching it through an opera-glass, with a knot of persons in attendance to give him the points. This got the painter into trouble when the pictures went into the exhibition gallery. The court party were shocked. "Why didn't you paint His Majesty at the head of his brave army?" "Because I never saw him there. But it's easy to destroy the evidence"; and in a fit of rage he seized a knife and slashed the canvas to ribbons before their eyes.

Everything about him was grandiose. He was one of the handsomest fellows I ever met, with his fine figure, his great flowing beard, and eyes of fire. But the Tartar was always there under the veneer of civilization, only waiting for the scratch. He was the educated savage, the most formidable of all combinations in our epoch of semi-civilized man. Like the savage, his decisions in the most momentous affairs came with the speed of light. He would set off to the ends of the earth with hardly a handbag for his kit, and make for the first train or the first boat that would put him on his way. Why trouble about packing: it was so easy to get what you wanted as the want came.

At Maisons-Laffitte he had the largest studio in the world, for what that was worth—the floor space a hundred feet or so by fifty, the doorway like an opening in a barn, a window to match, and with that the whole thing fixed on a huge turn-table to enable it to follow the course of the sun. It was rather suggestive of scene-painting if you

like, so was the work, but it was quite good of its kind in its rendering of the verisimilitude of life and character, and he had no concern about anything else. He was sometimes served here by a Russian peasant who did his odd jobs in the carpentering line, and who, as a national peculiarity, wore his shirt outside, all the way down. The first apparition of this figure at the railway station, as a consignment from the Steppe, was dismay for the local authority. The *gendarme* on duty took him into friendly custody, and we had to set forth together to get him out of bond. He shook himself when he got in, and at once went to bed on the bare boards in a cupboard under the stairs. The relations between the pair were still the old protective ones of master and serf, though there was much attachment on both sides. Jacob—such was his name—was regularly taken to the vapour bath once a week, and otherwise seen to as a good traveller sees to his horse. He had come from his village and he was sent back to it with all care, when his spell of service was over. Part of his wages went in remittances to his wife, and it was understood that, if she failed in any point of duty during his absence, she might get a beating on his return. The arrangement suited both sides, as covering all misdemeanours whatsoever, and leaving all clear for a fresh start.

Western civilization always irked the master, though he had seen as much of it as anyone to the manner born. If he had known enough English, and he knew a good deal, he would have called it namby-pamby. When he exhibited at the

Grosvenor with the gallery all to himself, he found the directors with their methodical ways and their regard for the conventions, very much of a trial. It was the Asian collection, and by way of commending it to the British public, he rigged up a weird figure, as from Bokhara, and stuffed it with a sandwich man to perambulate Bond Street by way of bringing custom to the show. The directors objected, and I believe he told them to go somewhere, or to be sent there post-haste, with the aid of a pistol which he always carried in his pocket as a survival of his life in the wild.

Once, in Paris, he nearly used the weapon in a very distressful scene. He held an exhibition at the offices of the *Gaulois*, a paper at that time edited by one of his countrymen, an ex-professor of a Russian university. Verestchagin hated the man, because he had brought some of the revolutionary students to grief by denouncing them to the authorities. This rankled in his mind, and still he had to keep on terms, since, for the moment, their business relations were both under the same roof. One day we strolled in from the Boulevard and my friend went up to the editor to see how things were going on, while I awaited his return in the antechamber. Presently I heard angry voices from the sanctum, and I rushed in with the attendant to find them facing one another on opposite sides of the table, each with a pistol at the other's head, and exchanging a preliminary fire of abuse in the choicest Russian. I never

stopped to ask Verestchagin what it was about till I had him safe in the street. "The wretch," he said. "I told him what I thought of him, and for two pins" (free translation from the French) "I'd have shot him like a dog."

With all these traits he was quite wheedling with the critics when they came for the notices, and even went the length of offering the general public free teas with no stint of caviar. The last was not a bribe: it was only his sense of the proprieties on the part of an artist with callers under his roof.

At about this time, I took a holiday trip to Vienna for my first view of the German at home. The familiar characterization of these southerners as the French of Germany is fairly exact. The South German is pleasure-loving, easy, affable, by the mere fact of his greater intimacy with the sun. His contact with so many alien races of the same cast has also kept him up to the mark of the social amenities. Hungary, and his slice of southern Poland have been of priceless value to him. Every Hungarian is a bit of a Don Quixote; most of the Poles foolishly put their poetry into their lives, instead of into their books. The Slav element, and the Latin, have been precious influences for the German of the south. His ideal is the joy-ride through life, tempered only by respect for the police. One makes his acquaintance without effort. My memory of him and of his womankind is dotted with the delights of little suppers, where you might say anything that came into your head, if

you only knew how to say it, of little musical *soirées* where you still heard melody of the good old-fashioned sort, of genial professors who never talked the shop of culture out of business hours, of visits to the studios—to Makart's, especially, as the leading man of the day.

Makart was rather stand-offish, no doubt, but that was only because he had to live up to his reputation as a master; and it soon wore off. Like Verestchagin, he painted on the colossal scale: his Entry of Charles V into Antwerp was as exacting in the matter of house-room as a masterpiece of Veronese. It was all love and war, the first especially in its most voluptuous effects—the hero with a sort of bodyguard of nymphs who had given themselves scant time to dress, in their haste to show the way to the primrose path. It took even Paris by storm, at one of the great international exhibitions—not without some misgivings in regard to its real value as art. He carried the craze for splendour into his private life. His vast studio was rather a showroom than a workshop, a glory of choice cabinets, carpets, trophies of arms.

His followers found it easier to affect his taste for glaring lights and bituminous shadows than to catch the trick of his genius. One of them, whose acquaintance I made, was keen on trying his own luck with the method at the French *Salon*. I duly promised to do what I could for him, and, when he arrived, offered to make him acquainted with Sargent as a coming man. He hummed and hawed, and said he only wanted to know first-rates.

Paris soon knew him no more, and I was avenged on a silly fellow while Sargent was saved from a bore.

Among memorable incidents of this Vienna visit was the sight of the Crown Prince Rudolph and his wife, the Princess Stephanie of Belgium, at the opera house. It was Owen Meredith's "she looked like a queen in her box that night" in actual realization. They scarcely spoke, and both seemed to long for more congenial society. I hope I remarked as much at the time, and that for this impression I owe nothing to my after knowledge of one of the most mysterious tragedies of history.

Some time after I was able to make a much longer stay in Berlin. There was work to do, and with it the attraction of another one-man show by Verestchagin. He rarely, if ever to my knowledge, sent his pictures to the ordinary galleries. He took subject by subject—Central Asia, India, the Russo-Turkish war—and worked on it till he had exhausted it and himself. Then each collection went the round of the capitals of Europe, with the hope of the great cities of America to follow, and sometimes the realization. This enabled him to show his work to the best advantage, free from all interference by hanging committees, while it ministered to his love of distinction. There was the series, one and indivisible, and, to keep it intact, he often refused the most tempting offers for single works. His aim, sometimes successful, was to have it bought in bulk by public subscription, and housed in a state gallery to glorify his

name for ever. The system had the fatal disadvantage of compelling him to be his own business man. He took incredible pains to effect the miracle of the dual personality. The works were packed under his eye, and sent off in waggon loads suggestive of the transport of an army corps. All this, for the time being, made him quite a different kind of man from the creature of impulse I have already described. He brooded over his treasures, he intrigued for them at Custom House doors, he darted half-way across Europe to receive them at their journey's end. Yet again, with this strain to aggravate his natural irritability, we may imagine the occasional explosions.

In Berlin it was a peculiar trial because he had determined to surpass himself there. It was to be all the collections in one, in so far as they were at his disposal, a review of the labours of a lifetime. He took a whole theatre—Kroll's; shut out all the daylight, and had the place lit by electricity —needless to say at what expense. He hung it with velvet from gallery to pit to hide the box openings, and give it the effect of one large hall, and closed the gap of the stage with his largest picture, the Prince of Wales entering Jeypore. You stepped from the raw day outside into a fairyland of light with its paths bordered by shrubs and flowers. With all this there was music from artfully managed recesses where a choir of Russian singers, imported for the occasion, wailed national airs.

Berlin would contentedly have paid its mark

for entry, to yield him a fortune, but he insisted on lowering the price to a sum equal to about threepence of our money, with, I believe, a reduction for schools. It was the only possible way of courting financial failure, and he took it in the interest of his glory. The Berliners talk of it to this day. Everybody came—that was enough for him. All the Court, with the Crown Prince Frederick, and the Princess *née* Princess Royal of England. The old Kaiser, as the exception that proved the rule, stood out, because he thought that such a profusion of the naked truth about war might damp the ardour of his troops. All the Generals, Moltke among them, sleek and silent as one of his own guns in time of peace, giant officers of the guard with impossible shoulders, tailor made, legs equally so, the trouser fitting like a skin, with clinking spur and clanking sabre, in which they no doubt went to bed. In their wake came the professorial classes, the leaders of society, and finally the million almost in full count.

The painter's brother, a captain of Cossacks, watched over it with ten times the zeal of a hired attendant to parry the elbow or finger-thrusts of the crowd, when they threatened to damage the wares. Here and there some canvas showed a graze in spite of him, and he had to take a wigging from his chief, with bowed head.

"Alexandre, Alexandre, they've scratched my Dervish at Prayer—what have you been about?"

"I've done my best, brother, but I can't be everywhere."

"Do you hear him? do you hear him? he can't

be everywhere. Oh the droll fellow (*le plaisant*). Did you ever see the like!"

He died in character: when his hour came, it found him on the Russian flagship at Port Arthur that struck a floating mine, and went to the bottom with nearly every soul on board.

> Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
> Wash far away,—where'er thy bones are hurled.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PRUSSIANIZED HISTORY

MY stay in Germany belonged to the period of a new Fatherland in the world of ideas. The intellectual movement was to organize and extend the conquests of the Germany of arms. The nation had won its unity on the battle-field; it had yet to constitute itself in other directions. This was to be done in new ways of living, a new outlook all round. The old Fatherland of the poets and the professors had done its work in preparation for 1870: a generation was now ready for the fullness of the pride of life.

The 'eighties, therefore, marked an epoch quite as important in its way as that of the great war. The German was now to realize himself, in a sort of ecstasy of patriotic brag, as the heir of the ages, and as the chosen one of the scheme of Providence, for the shaping of the spirit of man. The earlier influences had left him patient, laborious, sturdy, pious, and with most of his interests centred in the home. He was now to flower into the ruler rather than the mere citizen of the world. He already had a new music—epos and all—the time had come to scrap his rich endowment in the philosophies, as a mere second best, still good enough for humanity at large, and to start another

exclusively for his own use. This was to make him a being quite apart in the evolution of the race, with Prussia for its hard core.

Berlin, as I saw it, became more than ever the city of the back seat for the foreigner: "Pride in their port, defiance in their eye, I see the lords of human kind pass by" was no longer a poetical hyperbole. The military heroes reeked of self-sufficiency, from the officer of the guard to the humblest captain of a marching regiment. The very politeness seemed machine-made. People met for social enjoyment in unions organized under the most rigid rules; nothing seemed to come with the charm of accident. To borrow a cant term from the new philosophy, it was but the will to good breeding, and as part of the will to power. Their sport was cultivated for the muscle, not the muscle for the sport. This method of approach seemed to extend to everything but the table manners, which still, from the pocket comb to the management of the knife and fork, were those of the old dispensation. There was nothing of the soft play of life in it. It recalled a severe criticism of the *Sartor*, that Carlyle never forgot. "Our author reminds us of the German baron, who, when asked why he was jumping over the chairs and tables, said he was trying to be lively." Equestrians in the park put their steeds to the pace like circus riders, with swelling breast and haughty eye that seemed to solicit, or rather demand, a "hand" from the crowd.

It was part of my duty as a foreign resident to show my passport at the police office of my district.

One day when I was doing that, a poor "Bobby" of the rank and file came in to give an account of his stewardship; and sheer nervousness, I suppose, made him blunder in some detail. His petty superior positively barked—there is no other word for it—a reprimand, until the other became speechless with terror and confusion. He, of course, took his revenge on the private citizen. I heard afterwards of an arrest for some small offence in the public street. The offender, who had suddenly taken to his heels, was pursued, tripped up, and in a trice found himself on the flat of his back with the points of two police sabres at his throat. I was calling one day on an old friend in a public office, when his chief entered the room to discuss some matter connected with the day's work. My friend, who was quite on the same social level, immediately sprang to his feet for the salute, and began every phrase of the conversation with a "*ja, Herr Direktor,*" or a "*nein, Herr Direktor,*" which, in any other country, would have been rather out of place as between an office-boy and a Prime Minister. The Kaiser took his daily drive in Unter den Linden with the same curious observances. The sentry at the Brandenburger Gate had to become aware of him in the distance, and as he came within hail to raise a raucous shout that brought out the whole guard to seize their rifles, stacked for the salute. He seemed a pathetic figure, as the only being in all his dominions without a superior entitled to the kotow.

Nothing seemed to come "natural" to them, except drill for every spontaneous movement of

the soul. In literature they would have been capable of putting poets into commission, as in war they have already put Cæsar and Napoleon—not forgetting Attila and Tamerlane.

The first essay in modernity originated with the cult of Zola, by a band of precocious lads who, in the 'sixties, had been spoon-fed on his writings, and began to feel the longing for a new departure for its own sake. Of course, it was but another "Stürm und Drang," a something that seemed to derive its motive force from a steam-engine. German literature is peculiarly subject to these nervous disorders. The classic case is that of the Olympian Goethe and his *Sorrows of Werther*, in which he deliberately caught the complaint as the shortest way of getting it over.

"Down with tradition," was the cry. The topsy-turvy was to be absolute and not only in the arts, but in education, psychology, morals, politics, in the latter especially as the leading line of the new firm. All instruction that was not based on the intensive culture of the will was to die the death. The first leader of consequence was Michael Conrad, a Munich painter who saw literature as a sort of voluntary on the big drum. German-like, he founded a regular society for its propaganda, with a secretariat and an "organ" as a matter of course. This lively little thing manifested against "emasculated science," "fried fish criticism," "flunkeyism," and all else pertaining in hard words; though it was still but Carlyle's baron going methodically to work in the art of being without art. Berlin, naturally, was soon

in the field, and, characteristically, it began by doubling the local leadership with the brothers Henry and Julius Hart. At first they fought Munich for supremacy, but soon all joined hands. The programme was naturally destructive at the expense of the old gang. Dahn, Freytag, Spielhagen, and others were immolated on the altars of the faith, as mad *dilettanti*, guilty in some mysterious way of furthering "the work of hell," while Turguenieff, Dostoieffsky, Tolstoy, Björnson, and Ibsen—assuredly to the surprise of many of them—were claimed as patrons of the new thought.

The movement was much more serious in another field, history. It is deeply interesting to see how an outburst of creative energy in research that began with Niebuhr and universal sympathy should end in a Prussian school with a doctrine of universal conquest. Germany has long been the annalist of the world, but while she once wrote wholly in the service of truth, she now writes largely in the service of self-love. The change may be traced by the English reader in Mr. G. P. Gooch's recent *History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century*, a glory of British scholarship and learning in the literature of its kind. A History of Histories, it might more aptly be called, in its fascinating form of a history of historians. But the reader must find his moral for himself, for Mr. Gooch has none to enforce.

When beaten by Napoleon, the Germans naturally began to set their house in order to save them from extinction. They turned to history to learn what they had done in the past for national

regeneration, and what they might hope to do again. We know how well they took the lesson to heart. Their success was so dazzling in 1870–71 that they began to dream of universal empire. They had conquered France, why not the planet next? It was intoxication, but the historians had their share, and a deep one, of the draught. History gradually became the handmaid of this ambition, and at last grew to be the degraded study which it is with some of them to-day. This was mainly the work of the Prussian or Prussianizing historians.

The mighty Niebuhr was the founder of the science of history in its day of wisdom, justice, and power. His thesis was the evolution of freedom in human institutions, and he could afford to do full justice to all nations, and especially to ours, for their share of the work. Roman history was more especially his subject: he may be said to have dug up old Rome with his pen. He was too much of the period of national humiliation to be without his feelings, but he ever strove to keep them in due subordination to the facts. Nationalism and the dread of revolution were the dominant principles of his political philosophy.

Eichhorn, the most important of his immediate successors, went beyond this in his resolve to dedicate himself to history as a labour of constructive patriotism. Then came the Grimms, especially Jacob, with their glorious anthologies of the old German literature for the discovery of the Folk soul. If this was bias, it was only the natural one for Germany, without being against the foreigner.

"Prussia is done for," said Napoleon, "she has disappeared from the map of Europe." Even Goethe despaired: "shake your chains as you will, he is too strong for you." Wilken, a pupil of Eichhorn, went a step farther in his *History of the Crusades*, with Germany as the leading power in Europe. A history of the Middle Ages, in his view, should begin and end with the German race.

Ranke, the other great monumental figure after Niebuhr, was from first to last a sobering force. With him history was simply a great object-lesson in ethics and religion, and only with all possible reverence for the facts. He was as fair to the Popes as to Luther and the Reformation: balance was the only passion of his placid soul. He was fair to Prussia—too discriminatingly so to please many, Carlyle among them—for now, in the middle of the century, the taint of partisanship had become as indelible as a birth-mark. He simply refused to discuss the annexation of Silesia as a legal act. He was fair to England for the order and conservation of her march of progress. He welcomed the war of 1870, but mainly as a triumph of conservative over revolutionary Europe, and he was wholly free from the jingo taint. His rivals grew more and more impatient of his virtues: one dubbed him a sort of historian in kid gloves; another, a mere æsthete, whose outlook was that of an artist and not of a statesman. For all that, as Mr. Gooch shows, he was "the first to divorce the study of the past from the passions of the present, and to relate what actually occurred." And this, too, on the authority of the strictly

contemporary sources of the period in hand. He founded the science of historical evidence and withal was "beyond comparison the greatest historical writer of modern times."

But the Germanizing professors, if not the purely Prussian variety, were now maturing for their entry into politics as a party rather than a school. With them history was but a setting for the burning questions of the hour, and the idol of impartiality stood in their way. As far back as 1826 Leo had thought proper to censure what he was pleased to call Ranke's "timid avoidance of personal views," by which he meant his refusal to tilt the scale; and to talk of his work as mere porcelain painting for ladies and amateurs. His own work in history was certainly not open to that reproach: he seems never to have fastened on a theme without trying to make it serve the purpose of propaganda. "He glories in Hildebrand and Canossa, approves the inquisition and the Albigensian crusade, condemns Wycliffe and Hus, denounces Luther as the enemy of authority, and justifies Alva's reign of blood." This gave the patriots a method, if it did not give them a doctrine worthy of the name, and they were soon able to claim the illustrious Gervinus as a leader. The active life, he declared, was the middle point of all history. One of his heroes was Machiavelli, who "dared all for the good of his country." In this instance, indeed, it was only action for the promotion of democratic, as distinct from merely nationalistic ideas. He witnessed the unification of Germany without enthusiasm, and denounced Bismarck

for the war of 1864. He even kept his cap on his head when every other was in the air for Sedan. "I have always urged a federation, not a Prussian hegemony based on force." He "hardly belonged to any nation," said Treitschke, as he brushed him aside.

Waitz discovered that the early German tribes were highly civilized; and when one critic hinted that he ought therefore to have put them more into the picture, he excused himself on the ground that his authorities were chiefly "foreigners"—Tacitus, no doubt, among the number. Giesebrecht, a thorough conservative in politics, brings in the thin end of the wedge of the Imperial theme—a powerful empire, a vigorous church, a God-fearing people. He rises to enthusiasm over the emperors: "they made the German the people of peoples." Exactly what is thought at the Berlin Schloss to-day, exactly what its master thought when he got rid of Bismarck, in order to appropriate all the glory of the achievement to the dynasty. Even Sybel will hear nothing of this in regard to the emperors—the only hope of salvation for the bewildered reader is in the way these authorities contradict each other on the facts. He saw that all this reverence for the old empire was but a new-fangled thing, even if he did not fully suspect what purposes it was to be made to serve. Giesebrecht, he thought, would have done better if he had moderated his raptures, and struck a profit and loss account. The huge centralized empire of Charlemagne was detrimental to the races that needed free play. The subsequent failure of

Otto's attempt to revive it was a blessing for German nationality. Still, he added, as though by way of putting himself in order, Prussia was the true leader. At the same time, a scandalized Slavonic scholar rapped out a warning note against the limitless idealization of the German race. It passed all bounds; the German historian had two moral standards: one for Germans, another for the rest of mankind. While the Germans were extolled as the embodiment of every virtue, their age was bloody and dark.

The Prussian school began with Dahlmann, who had begun to write before 1848. But all he wanted was a Liberal empire under Prussian leadership, with constitutionalism for its corner-stone. Duncker, who followed, naturally wanted more: the German question was not one of freedom, but of force. He supported Bismarck in his conflict with the Parliament: "His writings breathe an almost mystical devotion to the dynasty." He had his reward, unsought in all probability, in his appointment as a kind of tutor to the Crown Prince Frederick, and Historiographer of Brandenburg. The next highest bidder was Droysen, pointing the moral for action, with a genial glorification of the military caste, and the militant statesmen. Prussia must not content herself any longer with being the second power in Germany—Bismarck is delighted with that. The old gang of moderation and common-sense protests against a book of this writer as "a bad novel," but he goes cheerily on to a verdict in favour of the Prussian claim to Silesia, in spite, as we have seen,

of the fact that Ranke had declined to discuss it on its ethical side. Droysen discovers in his sources everything that he wants to find, even when it is not there. And finally he touches the bed-rock of false principles on which all his followers have since built with the declaration that the state, which is the all in all, is not the sum of the individuals whom it comprehends, nor does it arise from their will. The present Kaiser, in his turn, must have been delighted with this: he once sent a special messenger to Parliament to the effect that he had no knowledge of the people as the source or sanction of his power.

The current has now become too strong for Sybel, and he shows his effectual repentance in a fierce onslaught on the French Revolution in every single energy of its being—an outburst that led Frederic Harrison to characterize him as "little more than a German Alison." In a moment of unwonted candour he owns his weakness: "I am four-sevenths politician and three-sevenths professor." After Sedan, he is Bismarck's man, body and soul, and is ready to defend the awful crime of the doctoring of the text of the Ems telegram that goaded France into the war. It was "shortened" only, not altered. He met with his appropriate reward. He had retained enough of his old doubts, as to the supreme part played by the emperors in German history, to venture to show that Bismarck counted for more than his nominal master in the overthrow of France. This angered the new master, the Kaiser who is still with us. He not only vetoed the grant of a prize to Sybel

for one of his works, but excluded him from the archives of the Foreign Office—a touch of petty spite that may help us to take his measure.

The greatest and last of the band was Treitschke. "The most eloquent of preachers, the most fervid of apostles, the most passionate of partisans," says Mr. Gooch, "he most completely embodies the blending of history and politics which it was the aim of the School to achieve." He simplifies the issue at the start, by adopting as his life motto: "In the dust with all the enemies of the Brandenburg." Germany is to be not only one empire, but one state. The smaller fry are not to be federated into union, but annexed. Prussia is to attack them straight away, apparently without waiting for the formalities of a quarrel. Hanover, Hesse, Saxony "ripe and over-ripe for annihilation. My father will grieve over it—he was himself a Saxon —but——" He, too, stood the test of the Ems telegram, which is a sort of touchstone for the best or, rather, the worst of them, without a pang. Even Sybel, as we have seen, could find nothing better to say in defence of it than that nothing had been added, only something left out. The other disdains all finessing of that sort. "What a humiliation we have escaped! Had not Bismarck so cleverly edited the telegram the King would have given way again." The history of Germany, in which he reveals himself in these interesting lights, comes into universal acceptance, and not as a mere history with others, not even as the history, but as German History—for good and all. His brother professors bleat protest here and there, but he

can afford to pay no heed to them: Germany has found what it wanted, its god of Grab. The old superseded deity of judgment and mercy was still able to discharge a Parthian shot before retiring from the scene. "God cannot take me away till I have written my sixth volume," cried Treitschke; yet he died while it was still to write.

He had all the gifts indispensable to a task which was to be brutal, reactionary, and a standing outrage on the human conscience from first to last, the magic of style, a power of loving and hating with almost volcanic force, a pen that was also a sword. All the catchwords of national and racial hatred were at his finger ends. He honours England with the bitterest detestation, "the Bible in one hand, an opium pipe in the other"—pipe and Bible as a matter of course. The Jews catch it in just the same way, and the anti-Semitism of Stöcker comes into its own. The hope of banishing war is not only meaningless, but immoral. The duel is a discipline for it: "If the strong vanquishes the weak, it is the law of life." It is history treated by a prophet scold of the first class, to meet the wants of the all-conquering race—history drawn and twisted into the required shapes like a piece of Austrian bentwood. It degrades colonization to the level of a mere parochial extension of the German norm in every institution and in every detail of corporate life, the very thing it is not and never can be in our day.

The end and the be-all of the state, we are told, is power: he who is not man enough to look this

truth in the face should not meddle with politics. A sacrifice made to an alien nation is not only immoral: it contradicts the idea of self-preservation which is the highest ideal of a state. God will see to it that war shall constantly recur as a drastic medicine for the human race. In one of his functions Treitschke is a sort of understudy of the furies of the old horde, shrieking on the new one to rapine and blood.

But one more prophet of wrath was wanted, and he came—Nietzsche. He is a thrice-told tale by this time, yet he has been strangely misconceived. His true significance, I suspect, is the one thing we have all missed. Historically, he continues the line of the great satirists of the world, as the Rabelais or the Swift of his time. To construe him literally is to degrade the estimate of his remarkable powers. He was a man-hater at war with his age, a super-sensitive, with a skin disease of vanity finally burrowing down to the roots of his being—a Timon of Athens, if you like, with Wagner for one of his ingrates. His philosophy is but his vengeance on the whole pack, in the form of fable. To take his Superman with a grave face as the forecast of the course of human development is to be in the same plight as the two right reverend prelates who discussed the import of Gulliver. There were some things in it, said one, that almost passed belief, while the other made bold to declare that, for his part, he didn't believe a word of it. Nietzsche's concept of the Son of Man as a patriot trickster in the service of the Rabbis was assuredly not his belief, but one that in his wrath he would

fain attribute to the bulk of his fellow-creatures. His girding at morals was but compassion for its low estate, rendered, of course, in the terms of irony. His dog-whip, as the only instrument for the government of women, was, equally in the nature of the case, no personal conviction of one who owed everything to the love and care of the most devoted of womankind. His true mark was that scorn of the suffering mass, that deification of the merciless masters, which he found in the society of all time. He saw that the ages have known no other dominant type, and that humanity, as it stands to-day under the burden of its sorrows, is the tragic result.

The letter killeth: to take all this at its face value is but Sporus breaking his butterfly on the wheel. He saw that modern society was perishing of the megalomania of individualism, and he produced his monster of the Superman, as Rabelais produced some of his giants.

But this is exactly what Germany has done at the bidding of the fatuous Brandes, eager to make good his claim to the discovery of a new light in literature. He has no criterion of judgment but the "powerful personality." He might have known that Superman is but the exaggeration, in caricature, of a favourite fancy of the professor at whose feet Nietzsche sat as a youth in the lecture room. Bürckhardt revelled in his conception of the "universal man" of the Renascence, the Tyrant and the Condottiere, who, "despite their ruthlessness, were men cast in a gigantic mould." It was the pupil's protest, not his confession of faith.

Bernhardi, with equal ingenuity in missing the point, is to Treitschke what Brandes is to Nietzsche. He hardly counts in any serious consideration of the case. He has degraded the Prussian historians to the level of mere quotations for his "trade circulars" of war, and is at best but a parasite of the regular growths. To be preached to death by a dull curate, as well as a wild one, is to suffer the superfluous pang. He stands for nothing but a pedantic scheme for the subjugation of the whole earth, until but one barbaric cry, and that a Hoch! shall be heard over the roofs of the world. He is about the only one of them known in this country. Yet, with all his imperfections on his head, he ought to be "appointed to be read in churches," not as an Apocalyptic warning of our national fate, but only to bring comfort to the citizen in his pew. England, of course, looms largely in his plan of campaign. She has long since found that those who set themselves to break Parliaments are apt to find Parliaments able to break them. Even the Prussian historians might have told him that those who undertake the larger task of breaking England run some risk of the same fate.

To form an idea of the extent to which all this has cast its spell over the German mind, we have only to turn to a curious manifesto from the German theologians, issued in the earlier stages of the war. It was addressed to "Evangelical Christians Abroad," and was, as the phrase goes, most influentially signed by professors, pastors, missionaries, evidently, by their official titles, of

the highest standing in Berlin, Munich, Halle, Hamburg, Göttingen, Frankfort, Leipsig, and elsewhere. That nothing might be wanting to give it its peculiar character, it came at a time when no small part of Belgium was but a landscape of burned villages, and thousands of wretched creatures, who had lost their all, were tramping the blood-stained roads on their way beyond sea for a roof and a crust. In face of all this, the manifesto invited the sympathies of the Evangelical churches of Christendom for a German people, whose ideal was peaceful work, who desired to thrust none from its place, who claimed only "a modest share of colonization in the primitive world," and who had only drawn the sword "to repel a wanton attack," and in defence of its individuality, its culture, and its honour.

The document concluded with passages from The Lord's Prayer.

This far transcends hypocrisy, it comes out of the very night of the human mind, the atrophy of the human soul, and it will remain for many a day the most terrible weapon in the armoury of the adversary. From first to last, the cause of Germany is implicitly identified with civilization, and the latter with "Teutonic Protestantism." No wonder that *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure* is one of the most widely read of Edward Carpenter's works.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE REAL ASIAN MYSTERY

MY life was still Paris as a place of settlement tempered by foreign missions. One of these took me to Russia, still the real Asian mystery. *Scribner's Magazine*, subsequently purchased by The Century Company, had made a new departure in serial publication, with a life of Peter the Great by Eugene Schuyler, United States Consul at Rome. There was need of material for illustration: I was sent out to collect it, for the benefit of the Russian and French artists in Paris who, under my direction, were to illustrate the work.

The conductors of the magazine—Mr. Roswell Smith as representing the company, and Dr. Holland as Editor, with Richard Watson Gilder as the next in command—had determined to make art in illustration one of the chief features. They took incredible pains about it, and were as lavish of money as other commanders are of lives. The old wood engraving was to give place to the new method of the process which preserves all the main features of the original drawing. All engraving is at best only a translation, and too often but a paraphrase: the other is verisimilitude, in all that makes for "quality"—the strokes of the brushwork, the happy accidents of the fever

of execution. A graver trying to be careless is sometimes but an elephant dancing a hornpipe. It was now to be the picture almost as it had come from the artist's hand. They imported largely from Germany, both for methods and for men. They had many ups and downs in the course of the heroic venture, but they won at last and revolutionized the higher art of illustration in our part of the world.

I took out the proper introductions, and I needed them. All official Russia was in the cold fit of suspicion and mistrust, the period being that of the assassination of the Tsar Liberator Alexander II. He had emancipated his serfs on conditions that satisfied neither them nor their masters, and, like most adventurous reformers, he was sacrificed to the principle of all or none. His successor was hardly encouraged by the example, and he went into gloomy retirement by way of giving himself a chance of dying in his bed. The Winter Palace was in a state of drawn blinds: the Imperial family walked the gardens of Peterhof within a ring of sixty thousand bayonets.

This was unfortunate for me, as I particularly wished to see the gallery of the Hermitage, for battle pictures or other memorials of Peter. The Hermitage is really a private collection of the Tsar to which in quiet times the public are admitted by imperial favour: it adjoins, and forms part of the Palace. How to get in? The will was there, and the way was found by the good offices of the *chargé d'affaires* of the United States. I had a special permit, and was put under the care

of a military officer, sword at side, but of course only because he was in uniform. He naturally had his instructions to see all fair to both parties, especially the Russian Government.

I had no reason to complain of him—quite the contrary. He was politeness and even court politeness itself. Though theoretically my leader, he always bowed me in front of him, and never asked me to turn right or left without a " will you be so exceedingly obliging ? " to preface the request. It was quite uplifting, if only you took it in the right way, and I managed to do that by cherishing the fancy that I was his imperial master, attended by an *aide-de-camp*. In this way we mounted the famous staircase of malachite, and passed with echoing steps through the magnificent galleries decorated in an equally lavish way. It was gratifying, but after a little of it I began to pity my prototype. Marooned in this paradise of beauty, without a kindred soul ! It was the image of the awful solitude of his state. The clanking sabre of my *aide-de-camp*—I think there were spurs too, for the effect of the minor key—seemed quite at cross purposes with the work on the walls. Peasant interiors, with dim figures saying grace in the light of a farthing dip, to save them from too close an inspection of their provender ; Temptations of St. Anthony ; a Spanish collection, the finest in the world outside of Madrid ; exquisite landscapes of all the schools, glowing in the soft light of peace, happiness and the beatitudes of the spiritual life. How enjoy such things in such a void ! Everything was out of keeping : you had

to skate from masterpiece to masterpiece over the polished floors.

Art and autocracy must often be at cross purposes. I had met Count Zichy on the way out, in his retirement from the post of painter to the Russian Court, and he showed me the drawings for his pictures, done under conditions that make all modern work "to command" almost invariably a failure. They were chiefly pencilled sketches of costumes, in microscopic detail. He explained that the first and last consideration with the august sitters was the spiritual import of their wearing apparel. They seemed to have a dress for every circumstance, every event, every mood of their superbly tailored lives. It was their only way of expression, consistent with the supreme necessity of saving a face in lines of eternal calm. One of his last commissions was a picture of the arrival at Sebastopol of the remains of the Tsarevitch Nicholas, who had died at Nice, his brother succeeding as Alexander III. The tremendously solemn import of the ceremony was imperilled at every moment, by this sense of the overlordship of the outfitter, in the minds of all. Such and such chamberlains, admirals, generals, governors of provinces were in attendance, each in uniform which had to be rendered in its minutest detail of *passementerie*, at large, not omitting the bell-ropes in gold and silver lace that, on such occasions, dangle from the shoulder to the chest. When these were right, and not a moment before, the picture was passed, but as no official was in charge of the simple pathos of the matter, this came very

poorly off. The very buttons had laws of their own : " kindly remember, *monsieur le peintre*, that my tunic has double lines of two buttons with alternations of three." All this multiplied into the several claims of epaulette, sashes, sword-knots, trouser stripes twin or single, orders and stars ! It was as bad as a wake, with the bier and its tenant reduced to a side show.

It was quite a relief to have to pursue one's researches in the Imperial library. Here was a librarian who was quite a fellow creature in the first place, and an official only in the second. He was always helpful, at times somewhat formally polite, but beneath all this quite capable of little tempers, and of airs of lassitude which showed that you had really worn his patience to the quick. It was all very well to be conscientious in your work, and to ask for this, that and the other almost beyond the resources of the printed word, but librarians have their feelings, to say nothing of their dinner hours. I remember a final outburst that brought me to my senses. " It is, as I have already had the honour to tell you, Monsieur, quite out of our power to answer that question." This is the Russian, old and new, the hot temper always at hand to help the goodness of heart out of a difficulty. The combination of the most obsequious civility with the rough edge of some original sin not yet worked out of the system was particularly refreshing, and it gave me great pleasure in his society. It had the charm of exploration without the labour of research, like a buried city within a hand's breadth of the surface.

This, so far as my observation goes, is characteristic of the race. Their Western culture is but one of their rough coats worn inside out to show a silken lining. They are still good fellows, that is the main point, and human in their alternations of the mood of the moment. I was lucky enough to see something of both at their best.

The old Russian boyar, or noble type, I encountered at Petersburg—I beg its pardon, Petrograd. He had a large estate within the city, and I had been referred to him as a person who knew all that was worth knowing about the iconography of Peter the Great. He might almost have had it at first hand from Peter, to judge by the antiquity of his manners and customs. I found him, by invitation, at a family dinner, and at the head of a long table with covers laid for thirty or so, husband and wife, sons and sons' wives and children, with a married grandchild here and there and his progeny, to make out. It was the patriarchal roof tree, as you may still find it in our old French colony of Mauritius, the dining-room as the baronial hall of the clan. Here, wherever they lived in the capital, they were expected to assemble on Sundays for the family feast. He was quite of the old school, in his long white beard of the days when Peter, fresh from his Western tour, had to keep barbers at the gates of the cities, to bring Asia into line with Europe. His garments were in the bunchy style of his primitive Russian prints, wrappers without much concern about a fit, the outer one half dressing-gown. The younger people were as smart as you could wish,

Paris and London at their best. He was hail-fellow-well-met, though in a certain stately way, and his manners were quite distinguished. It would have been impossible, I should say, to take a liberty with him without having to smart for it. He had a certain noble air as of one used to unquestioning obedience all his life. The children took many liberties for all that, while still watching him to see how far they could go. So long as he merely roared calls to order they had it all their own way, but when he named them, they stopped at once.

The style of it all must have come straight down for centuries, with hardly a change. To me, as the stranger within his gates, he was all high courtesy, serious discussion of the purpose of my visit, promises of aid, well kept. I don't know how far he ranked as a mere survival, I did not see enough of the country to judge that, but I fancy there were more of his sort than generally meet the eye of the tourist. I caught many glimpses of men like him in externals, people of the upper middle, cuddling huge bed pillows as part of their equipment for a railway journey and sometimes stores of provender in bags. It is quite conceivable that he carried his pillow too when he went abroad, and laughed at his manicured sons and daughters as milksops for being content to find all their comforts of home in palace cars. I daresay they laughed back again, though with discretion, so it suited both parties. This is Russia the old and the new, still side by side, and with perfect understanding and goodfellowship between them,

and no aloofness to mark a sense of the grades. It was a pleasant contrast to the free England I had left behind.

After dinner we went into the grounds where, as it was yet winter, a huge *montagne Russe* was reared for the slides. It was the well-known Russian variety of the toboggan. You mount to the top of a wooden tower, throw yourself into a sled and then career at railway speed down a gully of dark gleaming ice, banked on either side with snow, to reach a level where the loss of the impetus gradually slows you down to a standstill. Then up again and *da capo* till you have had your fill. It is a desperate business for a beginner, but I was silly enough to try it, even with a moujik for driver. He got me down all right, but I don't care to say what became of my topper hat and my dignity.

This interior may be contrasted with another of a Russian *salon* of the new generation. And still it was of the old one, for whenever I think of it I am reminded of the *salon* of Tolstoy's *War and Peace.* The conversation was still mainly in French, the figures, but for the fashions of the day, were the same, governing ring, military, leaders of society. The talk was politics, scandal, rumours of wars, the joys of life reduced by successive cultures to the needs of fastidious souls. The common topic, with which you were always safe, was the latest dancer at the opera. It was the Russia of the reaction against popular liberties, the white terror over again, and avenging itself on the red. This was my only glimpse of a society

of that kind, and I freely own that I felt afraid of it as something both decadent and unreal. All were but playing a part, in their smooth-spoken cynicism, their thick lacquer of polish, their almost utter want of all fervour of conviction, where conviction of a kind must still have had its place. Their talk on literature, however, was penetrating and good: they launched the phrase as happily as their forerunners of France, for with their subtle intelligence this was the charm they most readily caught. But these are not governing qualities in our hurly-burly of a world, still awaiting its finishing touches as a human settlement. One could not help thinking of their balance of fellow countrymen, some hundred and sixty millions strong, and wondering how long it would last as a thing sufficient to racial and national needs. Minorities always rule, of course, but they must be strong ones. With all their fine talk, fine manners, these good folk seemed to take high politics as some of us nearer home take the game of bridge. The women were the worst offenders in their passion for social form. I leave it as an impression for what it is worth, without attempting to explain or defend.

Certainly the aptitude of Russians for learning things is marvellous—a natural quickness. I knew of one who had four languages, besides her own, at her tongue's end—English, French, German, Italian. She spoke in them and wrote in them. And she had something to write about, a basis of solid studies in history, literature and the commerce of life. She thought in them, wrongly

enough sometimes, as I thought, in my turn, but that was merely matter of opinion. The thesis was there coherent and four square, with the power to hold her own in it. She was obsessed with the idea of a superior cast of mind to which she and her intellectual set belonged. With all this she was a most accomplished musician, and had filled the Queen's Hall more than once for concerts given in her own name. I have a certain hesitation in saying all this, because it may seem founded on mere recollections of my reading in prodigies of the past, our own Admirable Crichton or the continental Pico della Mirandola. As a lad, Crichton is said to have known a dozen languages : I wonder in how many of them he could have deceived the native. Gilbert Hamerton used to say that no more than two can ever be acquired in that perfection. The peculiarity in this lady's case as a Russian, was that she was one of many, only less richly endowed. And I hasten to add, still with the purpose of saving myself, that the union of qualities precluded the marked bias for one, that makes for success. Nothing in particular seemed worth doing, because all seemed so easy to do. The sense of this limitation helped to kill Marie Bashkirsteff. Distinction seemed ever to elude her, till she won it at last by the sheer frankness of her confession of failure. But she was not there to enjoy it when it came. " What shadows we are "—every aspiring soul should be able to finish the quotation.

The classic case, I think, in our British experience is Madame de Novikoff. It was a real part well

played: there was a moment, fleeting as even historic moments are, when she figured as a sort of supplementary ambassador. She knew all our great people as a friend and intimate. She wrote freely to *The Times* with Holy Russia and "our Tsar" for subjects; and she had huge store of postcards, to say nothing of letters still unpublishable, to show how heartily a Prime Minister of England entered into the fun of the game. Her day passed, for a meteoric appearance like that cannot possibly become an institution, but while it lasted it was enough to make her one of the women of the time. She seemed rather out of place in England, where every fine-drawn scheme is apt to be upset by a chilly blast of popular feeling. Yet she has lived to see a Russian Alliance for all that.

I was so lucky as to find Turguenieff at Petersburg, and to obtain access to him through a friend. Him I have always regarded as one of the first rates, because he did so much to reveal his native Russia to the Western world. I called on him one Sunday morning and found him with two or three friends. There was no mystery in their meeting, yet to me it had quite the air of a gathering of initiates of a forbidden faith—say Nicodemus taking his first course. When I strolled from there into the neighbouring cathedral, with its worshippers prostrate on the marble floor, I saw that this fancy was merely an atmospheric effect.

He received me most kindly, and showed interest in the work on which I was engaged, but was sparing in his references to things Russian,

as though he felt that he was on the wrong side of the frontier for that. What he thought of his native land and of its political and social life was in his works, for all who knew how to find his meaning. He lived abroad, but as the interpreter of Russia to herself and to the foreigner, it was not to his interest to deprive himself of all chance of occasional contact with the living text. Verestchagin used occasionally to scoff at him as wanting in pluck, but the great writer knew what he was about, and his was by far the finer mind.

The Parisian circle of his acquaintance was at once large and select. He mastered all that France had to teach him in literature, and, while equal to her best, as a craftsman of philosophic fiction, he had a just sense of their lack of contact at first hand with the deeper tragedy of life. When this secret came out in posthumous indiscretions, based on his diaries and letters, it was a little disconcerting to find that he had no great opinion of Alphonse Daudet, but, as you got used to it, easy to bear. It agreed with thoughts that had flitted through one's own mind, without being asked to stay, for lack of courage. The French writer was a little too manifestly anxious to please : urbanity has its price. The *Lettres de Mon Moulin*, wherewith he bounded into public notice, are a trifle insipid on a second reading, as being too much about all the certificated nice things nicely said. Octave Feuillet, as we have already seen, was the arch offender in this way, with his eternal theme of the hero as prig. Daudet was naturally upset by his friend's frankness, and he wrote bitter

things about hospitality violated, by a not too amiable *Russian from the Steppe*, which were much beside the mark.

Gorki, a writer of the same serious sense of the calling as his compatriot, came my way years after, and in a rather curious manner. One day, as he was passing through England to take up his long residence in the milder climate of Italy, I received an invitation to meet him at dinner at the chambers of Mr. Hagberg Wright. A dozen or so were at the board, among them Nevinson and Bernard Shaw. It could hardly be called a sociable gathering, for the guest of the evening had no language but his own, and most of the others were without Russian. Our felicitations therefore had first to be offered in English or French, and then turned into his mother tongue by the lady who accompanied him—with the process reversed, of course, for his acknowledgments. It became as tedious as an extradition case in the unknown tongue. He said something amiable to me about my work, and I could not help asking him how he came to know anything about it. " I have read it in translation," he said. I pricked up my ears : no application for leave had reached me from that quarter. As I afterwards learned, it was not required. The piracy was still a compliment of a kind, and I left it at that, no doubt to the perfect satisfaction of all concerned.

Naples set him up again—his lungs were in a very weak state. I hope he has suffered no relapse, by his patriotic offer to take his place in the ranks for the war of 1914. There was a twofold risk.

For a long time he found his native air a less dangerous adversary than his native Government. His first attempt to repatriate himself ended in a precipitate flight back to the south. Russia will have to find a better way of using men like that than to put truth-telling into her penal code. There are signs that the present struggle of nations and races may lead her to mend her ways. The offer to Poland gives ground for hope, but no more can be said, while Finland still mourns the loss of her chartered liberties. If all is to be, even second best in the world—and Pangloss himself would now hardly put in his claim for more—democracy must be allowed to try her hand. Everything else has been tried, and see where we are to-day ! with the only light in the sky focussed on the shining armour of the war lord, on his knees to the United States for a smile.

Tolstoy has left a literature for the masses more stupendous in conception and execution than even all his earlier work. It is little read outside of Russia, but its regenerating power for the spirit of man is simply incalculable. As a miracle of mere technic it stands alone, with this giant of intellect and heart making himself again, in his old age, as a little child, to bring the highest thought to the humblest minds.

It is curious to study ideals and usages as they actually function to make the whole world kin. The community of great ideas is of course the finest example, especially the community of the emotions. But these still have different springs according to the latitude and longitude, and

besides you have to know a people well to discover what is really astir in their souls. Meanwhile mere superficial manners and customs may sometimes give a clue of a kind. The very fashions are not to be despised. You may now travel all across Europe and Asia, and find traces of the reigning hat, male or female, of the Boulevard. I know it is so in Europe and I hazard the rest on trust. It is the same with the amusements, especially those of the grosser sort. The music-hall—one rather takes shame to say it—is a bond of union to-day. If I had been prepared with that reflection in time, it would have saved me a shock at the sight of a *lion comique* at Petersburg. There he was in a close imitation of the make-up of his prototype, The Great Vance, then our star above the horizon. It was faultless as to evening-dress and crush hat, not forgetting the button-hole. The " swell " of popular vision was the thing aimed at in each case. The racial differentiation came in with the artist's reading of his part. The Briton idealized in mere jolly-dogism, spreeing in floods of champagne, and ' to-morrow we'll get sober.' The Russian did better than that. His little song had the national *nitchevo*—for its burden, but in this case only as a mere devil-may-care, for the want of something to care about on your own account. Quite freely rendered, it might have stood for ' what's the use ? '—a deeper strain, I thought, than ours.

There it is—the deeper strain of thought and feeling ! Our current criticism is beginning to be better informed as to the real and effective Russian fiction of our time: Turguenieff, Dostoieffsky

and Gogol are now, it seems, to Russians, but as Jane Austen, Dickens, and Fielding are to us. One makes acquaintance with strange names such as Chekhof, Kouprin, Andreef, Sologub, and a host of others, as with the names of new stars in the firmament. All stand for the short story; the classic three-decker or so of the earlier Tolstoy model is not dead, but it is out of vogue. The new men say their say in fifty pages and still contrive to omit nothing that counts. Chekhof the optimist —a rare bird in that quarter—can, we are told, make a story out of three sentences and an interrogation mark—perhaps, after all, only to prove that it is possible to make too little of a good thing. Most of them, I regret to say, I can as yet but hope to read, if only for profitable nightmares.

My next stage was Moscow, for special research in the archives of the Kremlin. The harvest was a little too rich for the flying visitor. Pictured costumes of every period, especially of course of the time when Peter began to take matters in hand. Rude merrymakings and drinking bouts, great battle pieces with the armies drawn up to fit the squares of a sort of chessboard that stood for the field, with infantry lost, as it were, in the pine forests of their own spears towering to the sky, rectangular cavalry and artillery on the same plan. It was the formation of the time and it served to disconcert Turk and Swede, among the bonniest fighters in history. Perhaps the Scots' soldier of fortune in Peter's service had brought the pikes oversea. They saved the little there was to save at Flodden and won Bannockburn.

Then of course there was the Kremlin, the fortified city within the city, white stoned and still looking as new as when it rose from its ashes after the burning. Within, a bunch of little churches and official buildings, some with the dignity of shrines, all close together like things packed in a box. Even the great coronation church is but a chapel of ease beside Westminster Abbey, or the cathedral of Rheims—what is left of this now! One, and that the most perfect gem of orthodox art, is almost too small for use. You make the round of it in a jiffy, and go from turret to turret by passages in which there is hardly room for two abreast. Kneel in some of the shrines if you can, when two or three are gathered together: like most buildings public or private in Russia they are stuffy to the last degree. The idea seems to be—keep out the cold by keeping out the fresh air, and warming up the stale with everlasting fires. A mouthful of it is something to bite. The smell of incense in possession is often as old as the buildings. The Tsar sniffs the ages as he sits on his coronation throne. The jewelled ikons suggest untapped sources of wealth: the Russian Church has levied tribute of this sort for centuries. At the Troitska monastery, according to the legend, the cellars are full of precious stones: a new Aladdin would only have to broach the casks in which they are stored.

And all I still had to miss! for want of time, opportunity, knowledge—Moscow winning its way back to true metropolitan rank as the centre of the Panslavist movement and of the Panslavist faith.

I returned to Paris only to find that I should soon have to set out once more. Schuyler was getting behindhand with his copy for the serial issue, and wanted a clerical lift. This took me and my amanuensis to Rome in the depth of winter. We dug him out of a mass of proof, or of notes awaiting the shorthand writer, and saved the situation, but it was a close thing. At the farewell luncheon, he led me into his study for coffee and cigarettes, and for the welcome warmth of my first charcoal fire. I reached the station almost in a state of collapse : the fumes had poisoned me. However, I managed to stagger to the train, and to sleep it off in nightmare visions before the journey's end.

## CHAPTER XV

### AMERICA IN FACT AND FANCY

I SAW America for the first time in 1876. It was the year of the great exhibition to celebrate the centennial of Independence, and Philadelphia sent out her cards for company to the human race. Another visit followed a year or two later, my last at this time of writing. I had glimpses of other cities, as a matter of course, but I never got further west than Chicago. It was my loss, but in the same circumstances of limited time and opportunity I should have to suffer the same misfortune.

My first impression was how like England it is; ancient ways, sturdy British types and ideals—with a new departure in hospitality on trust without waiting a lifetime to make your acquaintance: even a refreshing absence of 'cuteness, at any rate near the surface, the only thing I touched. This was mainly a fancy, for I daresay I found what I came to seek. It was still the America of my boyish acquaintance with the literature—memories of Washington Irving as a classic, in new elegant extracts of the time; of Fenimore Cooper, as a delightful variant of Scott, and of his noble savage of the hills, touching civilization as with tongs. Add to these, from keepsakes and the like, memories

of Mrs. Sigourney, the travelling American interpreter of the 'forties, between the old land and the new, and of Peter Parley who, in a single sentence of his travels—"the streets of Paris are narrow, and often very dirty," still serves to carry one back to the days before the Flood. At any rate to those before Monsieur Haussmann, with Balzac looking on.

In the higher sphere of my later reading it was much the same. Longfellow's *New England* was but the old one, in inspiration. Bryant derived from Spenser, and by a kind of condescension in a man of his genius, from Kirke White and Blair. Holmes and Lowell, and even the august Hawthorne, still struck our native note. Others, defiant of this easy classification, were Emerson—I think the most abiding influence on my life—Whitman, Mark Twain, and Henry James. As for Emerson, I have always felt that, when he went to see Carlyle, the etiquette of kings required an immediate return of the visit.

All this was confirmed, as to tendencies, by later contact with American settlers in Paris. The colony of the demi-millionaires who had made their fortunes in trade—the half—of that earlier age, being as good as the whole of ours for the dreams of avarice. The colony of the diplomats, absolutely new to the business, who had found their harvest in the spoils of the vanquished, combined perhaps with services in the Civil War, and who made up for lack of training with the help of the permanent secretary and mother wit. As often as not, these had started in real estate, or in The

Balm of a Thousand Flowers. In exceptional cases their *grandes dames* were at times too exclusively based on recollections of Ouida. One I knew never spoke to a servant whether for praise or blame, but signified her wishes by signs, and had her rooms carpeted in double pile for the effect of ineffable repose. Ask me what was the common note, and I should have to say that they were all bland, equally the virtue of a good salad and of a good soul.

Then the colony of the artists, who carried on the tradition of Couture, and sold at good prices, and rode their nag in the Bois—all heedless, for the moment, of the youngsters, like Sargent, who were so soon to throw them out of their stride. I knew of one such, majestic in his sorrows, whose cry was "Oh ye gods and little teapots! *l'existence n'est qu'un lourd fardeau,*" as he declined in his old age to fancy portraits of ancestors at so much a foot, to boil the pot for the day.

So of course when I landed I found all my automata in waiting. The man of colour was rather a novelty, especially when I saw him on the box seat of the family coach, and wanting every inch of it as he rolled comfortably from side to side. Yet what was that, after all, but a bit of the 'Ole Virginny' of my dreams, with St. Clair of *Uncle Tom* in his chariot of state.

What a gulf, what an abysm of time between all this and the America of to-day, alive at all points, and in the van of every new movement if she dies for it! So much has happened between then and now—to give us Mrs. Wharton, for instance, as

the successor of Mrs. Sigourney, and Mr. Henry James as the successor of himself. I remember him so well at the period of change, when *Daisy Miller* was still in the freshness of her first youth, and he paced the beach at Étretat—in the crowd but not of it—as he meditated new and wondrous departures in the metaphysics of his craft. His early work was not wicked enough for some of the rising school, vaguely conscious of a want they could hardly express, and, if asked to try, calling him a Massachusetts Sir Galahad.

The new school, the new departures into the literature of life, manners, breadth of outlook, all that tends to make literature vital, directly resulted from the grant of copyright to the old country. Fair terms for the English writer, who could no longer be pirated, proved to be still fairer for the American, who, with infinitely more to say for American readers, found no paying market for his work while his rival's could be had for nothing. With that new encouragement, he set forth on a second discovery of his own continent, in character, adventure, local colour, and spiritual type that is in full course to-day.

My most interesting discovery in America was W.H.H.—we never called him anything else. He was my editor at the New York *World*, but of course, while there were three thousand miles of sea between us, hardly a thing of flesh and blood to me. We met as soon as I reached New York. I called by appointment at his chambers in, I think, the University Building, though no longer put to University uses, and the best thing I had seen in

a kind of cloistral seclusion on that side of the great deep. I was shown into a spacious room adorned with bronzes and pictures, all of them good, and some by masters. The books in several languages were of the same quality. I remember the brightness of the morning, the light making a clear cut of the shade, and falling on a small water-melon which I suppose was to be his appetiser for breakfast. All was in keeping of style, say, with a Hogarthian interior, including the black boy who had ushered me in. And then the great man fresh from his bath, and with the exception of his silken dressing-gown, another eighteenth-century touch, quite ready for company. The tall figure had passed the turning-point of middle age, yet there was still plenty of life in his smile, and particularly in his wonderfully bright eyes.

His talk contributed to the impression of something out of the past. It was deliberately good as talk, though rather too much in the modern note of social brag. In a quarter of an hour he had managed to show that he knew everybody worth knowing in both hemispheres. It was evident that most of the European capitals were, as Mrs. Gamp said in another connexion, as print to him. I believe her reference was to the wickedness of the age, but it might have stood all the same.

He had taken over the New York *World* long before Mr. Pulitzer came upon the scene. I believe he was backed by Mr. Tilden. His idea was to make it a model of good writing, and he was able to do that. He was master of the 'civil leer' of Pope's *Atticus*, and it was his pride to kill with a

touch. He collected a brilliant staff, not all of his way of thinking in politics, but with literary finish as their bond of union with the chief. William Brownell, subsequently the author of the finest and most searching study of French life, art and character of our time, was one of them, Montgomery Schuyler was another. There was touch in even the reports of fires. They slew De Witt Talmage every week. As he preached on Sunday in full vigour of rhetoric, they left him at his last gasp in Monday's issue—of course only to offer them just as good a target for that day week. Their *esprit de corps* was astonishing—it was a glorious attribute of their youth : they felt a stain on their professional smartness like a wound. One of them who as City Editor had missed an item, peached on himself, and offered his resignation on the spot.

Their editor, as a travelled man, took sole charge of the social scene of the whole planet. He went constantly to Europe for fresh impressions, and to pick up important people who were not on his list. Even the mystical Laurence Oliphant, of that forgotten masterpiece of fiction *Piccadilly*, was under his spell, and bowed his proud head to the interviewer. The only other with whom our leader shared that kind of mastery was Lake Harris, the arch mystic of some American phalanstery. His orders, transmitted by spiritual wireless across oceans and continents, brought Oliphant to heel in a moment, wherever he might be. *Piccadilly* comes to a close in that way. The master's call from distant America finds the disciple in that compass point of British fashion which gives its title to the

book, and he starts at once. In the long run, unfortunately, he went once too often, taking his family in tow, with direful results to the integrity of their fortunes, and of their souls. It was a tribute to the powers of W.H.H. that he was able to make a part for himself against a pontiff of that sort.

Much more about him came to me afterwards in the talk of the time. There was a sort of synthesis of W.H.H. in the clubs and the drawing-rooms. People smiled when he was named, yet took care to right themselves by saying—"O, he's a card!" I learned that he was a duplicate of Aaron Burr in regard to his extraordinary influence over women. He could make them believe what he liked about himself, on the one hand, about his enemies on the other. He was sympathetic, unscrupulous, fascinating, merciless—according to the needs of the situation. Here and there, in the retirement of lodgings in a German spa, you might find one who was expiating him as an offence for which there was no hope of pardon, and hardly any desire. He had made her talked about, and she had fled there to music, art and memories to make the best of a broken life. Another, still in the haunts of men, carried his portrait in the innermost recess of a double locket, on a fatuous estimate of herself as the only she. He had the spell. Where he was not known he could have little doubt of the result. Where he was, he fell back on his power of suggestion, and got himself accepted as the lost one who had found his ministering angel. This had its risks for the ministrant.

Vigny's Eloa, we remember, in trying to raise a demon up to heaven succeeds only in bringing an angel down to the pit.

In this line his reputation was of old date. As far back as the Civil War, Winthrop, one of its victims, had written a novel round him, *Cecil Dreeme*, a classic of its time. Nobody, I suppose, reads it now. He figured there as the arch villain of a sombre piece. The date of the story is now almost remote enough to carry him into legend. But in current talk strange tales were told of his early life at a theological college, where he preached the most edifying trial sermons, and wrote hymns, one of which still retains its place in the collections.

For many, even of his detractors, he was another biggest thing in creation. It was prodigy at least, and he had the additional attraction of being on the higher social plane. In this way they found a use for him as a link between decadent Europe, and a still Puritan America not unwilling to toy with the follies of the age. He became a sort of introducer of celebrities for the dinner parties of Fifth Avenue. Was it a duke, W.H.H. had met him on his native heath; was it a poet or a sage—he had capped verses with him, or axioms of worldly wisdom, under foreign skies. On one of these occasions I found him chatting the high life of both spheres in French, Spanish, Italian—one down t'other come on, with a *brio* that fascinated the whole circle. It was Alcibiades playing off a rugged old Spartan ephor against a satrap of the great king, each without a particle of faith in him, but captive to his charm.

Then came the last act of the piece. Tired of these facile triumphs, and perhaps aware of the approaches of old age, he married, and cleared out for the final conquest of London. Here his part was that of the interpreter of America to England, the warm friend and admirer of the latter, but only as one who had nothing at heart but the good of both. It was the time of the great divide on the question of Home Rule. The Unionists, whether Liberal or Conservative, wanted arguments against the hated measure that should bear the stamp of the just man made perfect by his freedom from national prejudice and party ties. He was soon ready for them with a beautiful book on the subject, which captured society in the mass, and opened to him every drawing-room of the sacred mile. It was written rather in sorrow than in anger. It chid the clannish spirit of the Irish in the States. It predicted danger to the sacred fabric of the British Constitution in a new Tammany of imperial scope. The Unionist reviewers were in raptures over it as the ripe fruit of the wisdom of the ages. It promised to root him for ever in the generous soil of Mayfair.

And then, suddenly, a bolt from the blue: his name in other columns of the papers—as defendant in a suit of breach of promise of the most sordid caste. The plaintiff a third-rate actress, if so much as that—Nobody *versus* the Darling of the gods—Nobody, picked up in a London omnibus, and but 'the other day' of the date of the action, while his recently assumed crown of a well-spent life was still rather a tight

fit. What a trial it was! days—weeks of it, as recollection serves. Reams of criminating letters —either in his handwriting or in that of the enemy of mankind, said the experts. The plaintiff sticking to her story of at least a desperate flirtation, with the promise of marriage; the defendant laying his hand on his heart and declaring that he had never seen or exchanged a word with her in the whole course of his life. Then, the offer of an hypothesis, in the nature of happy second thoughts on his side, that might possibly clear up the whole mystery. Years before, he had a private secretary, one Wilfrid Murray, now lost in space, who wrote exactly the same hand as himself: could he be the Simon Pure of this strange delusion? Cries for the production of the secretary on the part of the public; and, on that of the defendant, lavish advertisements offering rewards for the discovery. Finally, sensational appearance of the lawful wife in the witness box to testify that her belief in her husband's honour was unimpaired. On this he won his case. The jury found that, whoever wrote the letters, they carried no promise of marriage, and there was no more to be said.

But there was still something to be done, and that was the impounding of the letters at the instance of the Public Prosecutor, with a view to making them the foundation of a charge of perjury against a person as yet unnamed. On that, the sudden departure from England of the hero of the piece, his ostensible motive the search for Wilfrid Murray throughout the universe. He never came within the jurisdiction again. No

long time after, appeared a letter from the devoted wife to say that he had died in her arms by the borders of one of the Italian lakes, and to call down public odium on the wretches who had hounded an innocent man to his ruin. It was a fourth act that amply fulfilled the promise of the others; and of how few dramas on the stage, or of real life, can you say as much as that?

So if I am ever to see the States again it will be as a new Rip Van Winkle, richly freighted with memories of their own past. Need I say more than that I remember horse omnibuses in Broadway, with the fare poked through a hole in the roof, and *The Tribune* building as the supplementary wonder of the world.

And if, with that, one had the same power of forecasting their future! All one can do at present in that way is to note portents and signs. I have already noted some of them in the literature: I return to that. The fiction is no longer mainly British in subject, and where it sometimes is so, it is still not British in treatment and in the point of view. From Cable, from Mark Twain, from Bret Harte, down to the author of *Mrs. Wiggs and the Cabbage Patch*, the themes are nearly all American. And in many instances the treatment is absolutely American too. Mark Twain's humour is not in the least the humour of Swift, or of Rabelais; it is an American product. Mr. Dooley too is of the soil. It would be impossible to imagine anything more purely American, anything less indebted to observation, literary or otherwise, of any foreign model than the work of Joel Chandler

Harris. He has put a new type into literature, new, right down to its very roots, that will stand by itself for ever.

Then in criticism, the influences are mainly French. Not only is there a warm welcome given to writers like Bourget and Rod, but native writers of the standard of Brownell are French, or nothing, in their point of view.

The most striking example of the non-English strain is to be found in the series of Hibbert lectures, originally delivered by Professor William James in Edinburgh. He enlarged the bounds of psychology in a way to make the Scotch metaphysical writers turn in their graves. He brought into the study of processes of mind and spirit influences hitherto kept completely outside of it, telepathy and spooks among the number. As to the University teaching, once mainly British in its structural lines, the revolt against that began as far back as Emerson, who refused to take his Bachelor's degree because it was not worth the five dollars fee.

The capital fact of my observation of Americans as a body politic is their determination to prove all things for themselves, alike in good and ill, like the child playing at the fireside. It is the first real example in history, I think, in spite of the Greeks. Tammany is, or was, but the common man wishing he could get the same chance; and when he found it would not be worth having, harking back, like another child of Israel, to the moral law. I wonder if there is any other way of educating ninety millions of people.

I toy with this fancy in one of my books. The world has never seen the like of the new experiment. Ninety millions all brought up to do as they like, in a very riot of opportunity, and just as free to go to the place unmentionable to ears polite, as to satisfy their yearnings for better society. The old countries know nothing of the temptation. They are still in the leading strings of superior guidance, and content to regard a thousand years as but a day of their pilgrimage. The ninety in close quarters would be bad enough, but think of the same in a limitless paradise of climate, soil, wealth, actual and potential, beyond all calculations whatsoever.

It is a sheer delirium of the will, a second Renascence of the evil, as well as the good. Their bosses the most bloody, bold and resolute of their order in all history—colossal exaggerations of Jonathan Wild the Great; their very train robbers, Turpins of a larger mould; their gangs of corruption, the most ingenious and all-pervading; their proletariat, with Judge Lynch at their head, the most fierce, pitiless and revengeful. A case of absolutes all round, happily in the finer things as well; and with all this, a democracy on its way to the light with no control worth talking of from priest, ruler, or Old Man of the Sea. They have accepted the theory of the good and the evil principle in perpetual tussle, and small wonder that some of them, by way of proving all things, are quite disposed to give each a fair trial. They may still be wrong, but it is certainly not for Nature to cast the first stone. She sets such queer examples.

Is not her whole scheme a war of elements? her fire and water never meeting but to hiss their mutual hate.

They will be first to reach the light, I think, but of course there is a possibility of other fortunes, which at times sends a cold shiver through one's frame. They *must* win. Democracy has to vindicate itself against Kaiserdom, or what will become of us all; and of the hosts ultimately marshalled for that effort they will stand in the van.

Another fancy, this of pure speculation, will keep me in delicious uncertainty for ever. Mr. Zangwill and others have shown us that America is the melting-pot of the races—what will the final product be? They will have to be poured into some sort of mould to cool off—how will they come out? And, once again as I have said elsewhere, the real American man, especially as the future will know him, is not yet born. The ninety millions soon to be so many more, from all the most pushing peoples on the planet, in their most pushing examples, have yet to settle down into a type. What a process in racial chemistry! who shall forecast the result? He will certainly not be English any more than the Englishman of to-day is Saxon, Norman, or Dane. At best, it can only be English as a blend of other first-class stocks that will be a new fact of creation. I figure him in my fancies as one with the alertness and brilliancy of one race, the passion for justice, principle, rectitude of another, and, again, with this Puritan cast tempered in its rigidity by the fire of his sense of life. Another influence still

veins him like marble with an innate courtesy and a fantastic honour, another still with a thoroughness that lets nothing pass without examination, not even a joke. With this again, as Nature's own secret in the combination, the emotion of colour, the sense of pulsation that make for art, poesy—beauty, in a word, as the true business. And then, again "dogged" as a solid foundation in the concrete of character to keep all in its place, and to remind him in moments of reverie of great-grandpapa.

There are still risks of a far different result—one of them perhaps that the melting-pot seems to grow more exclusive every day.

But patience, patience, with hope and faith. It is no easy matter this making of one more leading stock, the rarest thing in all the history of man. The number has never yet run into two figures or anything like it, for thousands and tens of thousands of years usually go to any operation of that kind. Still we move faster now. Hitherto the Life Force, as it now prefers to be called, has been in no more hurry about it than the Chinese are with the making of the clay for their pots of price. It is first get the right clay, then bury it for a century or so to mature, then—and this only for the first stage. Americans of course would like to have all ready for next Fall.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FRANCE HERSELF AGAIN

FRANCE was now in rapid recovery after the war. Such changes are among the standing miracles of history. You see a state, wellnigh at its last gasp—devastated cities, ruined railways and bridges, trade and industry at a standstill; and then, almost with the ink yet wet on the treaty of peace, a sudden spring back to life and work. It is easily explained. Creation is still the dominant impulse of the race, destruction takes but a second place. Only thousands destroy, but millions to their full count of the population are interested in the labours of restoration. By an irresistible law everyone flies to his store, often from secret hoards, to stock the shop and the market. Adam delves again, Eve spins, the children find their way to the schoolhouse. Every insect of the swarm brings his mite to the reef, till the magician's wand sinks to the level of a bauble of pantomime.

The new France came into being under conflict of course, but of conflict within the bounds of law. Should it be the old monarchical France in a fresh lease of life, or the France of the revolution, tempered by experience and by suffering into common sense? We know which system won,

and which has proved the most stable of all the French systems of a century.

Gambetta struck for that side, and as its leader. It was a matter of will and of temperament, quite as much as of intellectual pre-eminence. He was a second Bismarck in that way—a strong animal nature, a bull of Bashan of politics. He ate well, drank well, had *Rabelais* for his bedside book. By nature a governing man, he took on the airs of state as one to the manner born. To get access to him, you had to "make antechamber" as in the palaces of kings. A venerable personage, who wanted only a staff to complete his equipment, ranged the suitors for place or preferment, according rather to their importance than to the order of their coming. Sleek young fellows of good standing, on the look out for prefectures, were of the number. The influences were entirely avowable from first to last, but of course devotion to the republic was the supreme test. The French do all things methodically: these aspirants had a good understanding among themselves to prevent them from getting in each other's way. All this was arranged in a club to which they belonged—a club of place-hunters, it might have been called, though in no disparaging sense—where they sipped light refreshments and contrived to make their own destinies harmonize with those of their country. So I once found them engaged, on a visit to the institution under the guidance of a friend.

The great man, I believe, had the same hearty welcome for one and all of us. It was certainly so in my own case, and naturally, for I wanted

nothing of him but information for my papers. When all were dismissed for the day, you might meet him in the Champs Élysées on his way to dinner with the elder Coquelin, the actor, his great chum. He leaned heavily on his friend's arm, for he was premature in his heaviness of age. Hats were raised as they passed, sometimes in payment of a double debt of homage to both, though Coquelin of course had the tact never to raise his in return.

Jules Simon, another member of the governing group, lacked this natural *bonhomie* of his chief, and suffered for it in his standing with the crowd. He was a man of the study, a man of books, and as such the right one in the right place, as the great organizer of popular education. I saw traces of his handiwork, years after, when the ship of war bearing Admiral Gervais and the fortunes of France put into port at Bergen on her way to Petrograd. Her voyage was the first public sign and token of the coming alliance. I went aboard; and between decks, found the Catholic chaplain putting the conscripts through their three R's, lest even the Breton peasant, fresh from his flocks and herds, should escape. Jules Ferry, as minister, carried on the same good work. When it was done, the old Sorbonne of Paris became what it is to-day, a generating station of intellectual light for the whole nation, and virtually without cost to the consumer.

With the same thoroughness, Rouvier organized French finance. He was a dark meridional, with a genius for figures, and something more—large views. He could think in millions. Here again

you had the personal note, as one of the secrets of popularity: Rouvier, like his party chief, loved good cheer. He was suitably mated with a woman who could shine by herself without any reflected light, even from him. She was the famous Claude Vignon, of a pen name, writer, artist, and between whiles one of the best cooks in Paris. Her intellectual hold on him was strengthened, with or without need, by her amazing dinners, which on Sundays, as a holiday task, she cooked all by herself. It was heroic, for she had still to take due care of her good looks.

As a girl she was the sculptor of the day, and men with long memories could tell you of a bust from her chisel that was the sensation of the *salon* of 1853. She studied under Pradier, and was employed through his interest on great public works; the cupids playing round the fountains in the square Montholon were by her hand. She had fashioned successfully a notable Bacchus, and a notable bust of Thiers—of course not as boon companions. In later life she took the political correspondence of the *Indépendance Belge*, at present time of writing published in London as one of the incidents of the German invasion! In my time she was to be seen in the Press gallery of the Chamber at work on her despatch for the night's post, and this eventually brought her into contact with Rouvier, as member for Marseilles. He began by successfully managing a large house of business, and ended as the almost indispensable Minister of Finance of every republican government.

Clemenceau, while of that party, fought for his

own hand against its leaders. He continued that practice till he became a minister himself, when he was repaid in kind. I think it was more a matter of sporting taste than anything else. He was a born fighter: you had only to look at him to see that. The close-cropped hair gave the suggestion, the eyes, in their hollows made by the high cheek bones, gave the certainty. The death mask of Napoleon tells just the same tale. He was still most useful in holding a brief for the Radicals in a republic of moderates. His electoral meetings were invariably interesting as drama—in the struggle over the election of the bureau, the give and take of dialectic between the member and the crowd.

Rochefort was against them all. There was the slipperiness of the eel in his composition, the venom of the snake, and every one by turns felt the smart of his poison, if not the death stroke. He had egged on the *Commune* to its mad venture; and as the Versaillese troops came into Paris, he naturally went out. He was caught at Meaux, artistically made up for flight. In this extremity he made no scruple of begging for his life from the men he had done nothing but revile. Trochu was one of them, Gambetta, to whom he wrote a letter of suppliance, another. The latter got the death sentence commuted into one of transportation. Years afterwards, when the suppliant, amnested and in full favour as the idol of the Parisian mob, renewed the attacks, he was publicly reminded of the obligation. He flatly denied it. Gambetta produced the letter. The other was equal to the occasion: he confessed to the hand-

writing, while still denying the appeal. He vaguely remembered, he said, having written something at the dictation of his advocate (no longer living to affirm or deny), but he had a clear recollection of having forbidden his friend to forward it. This served with his worshippers, and he went on spitting venom to the last, in the full enjoyment of what are called the good things of life. His word was unquestionable only when it came to pictures and *bric-à-brac*, of which he was quite a good judge.

He began life as a government clerk, when Villemessant lured him to the *Figaro* with a splendid salary. It was the policy of the paper—to discover a new genius every quarter, work him to the very death of his vogue, and then scrap him for another. Rochefort was shrewd enough to dismiss himself in time. Foresight is better than repentance :—" What a goose I've been ! " were probably the last words of the one that laid the golden eggs.

Louise Michel, another figure of the *Commune*, was of quite a different stamp—Anarchist and angel of pity in one. She derived from Rousseau —men were all good if only institutions would be so kind as to leave them alone—and she was simply incorrigible in her love and tenderness towards all sentient things. In her prison cell, she made friends with the rats and often asked them to dinner. Left to themselves, she found, they were far better than her own kind, and particularly in their care for their aged and infirm. On her way to New Caledonia, caged in a deck-house of steel with the other prisoners who took the air, she cheered

her weaker comrades, though she had little to give them but a smile. As I knew her, when she came back under amnesty, she was thin, angular, with the long face of Flemish sainthood, and far beyond her prime. She had started in life as a schoolmistress at Montmartre, but the insurrection soon claimed her for its own. She fought to the last, and surrendered only to secure her mother's safety. She defied her judges and the very government that offered clemency, refusing even to leave New Caledonia, till less culpable comrades had been set free. Twenty thousand people turned out to meet her at St. Lazare.

I took care to be at her first public meeting. There was no applause, even when she rose. The tall figure mounted the platform, advanced to the front and without a preliminary *Mesdames et Messieurs* plunged at once into an address. It was one of the most effective I ever heard, just because it was devoid of all the arts of oratory. It gave the impression of an earnest woman who had simply left her fireside to speak on a public topic of importance. When she had done, you felt she would go home again, and become a very private citizen till the next meeting. There was not the slightest suggestion of the professional orator in the gesture, and scarcely any in the modulations. But the address told by a sort of rapt mysticism of manner, as though the speaker were making herself the mere mouthpiece of her Voices. The secret of its effect was in the perfect contrast between the manner and the matter, the latter, on this occasion, a fierce denunciation of the

capitalists, that did not shrink from the terrible issue of civil war.

She declined a public banquet on her return, and started at once for her mother's village. The old lady had no share in the daughter's opinions, and indeed no sense of them. Her sole wish was for a quiet life for both. Later on I found her tucked up in bed in a Paris flat and quite well enough to be as troublesome as a healthy baby. When the talk turned to politics, Louise motioned me into the next room, while still leaving the door ajar lest anything should go wrong with her charge. Something did go wrong very soon, when a lusty cry came from the invalid :

" Who is this gentleman, dear ? "

" Oh, a friend, mother, only a friend."

" What does he want ? "

" Just a little matter of business."

" How do you know he is not a policeman ? "

" But he is not, mother ; and if he were——"

A pause ; then :

" Louise ! "

" Yes, little mother."

" Ask him if he's a policeman, before you say another word."

" Don't fidget, mother dear ! "

How different the other type of anarchist, Ravachol. To think that such a woman should ever have lived in the same hemisphere, to say nothing of the same party, with him ! He was of a type common enough in French criminality, robber and murderer first, but still with a political theory for the pose. He cut throats for a living, gave

some of the proceeds to the poor, and spent the rest in suppers to celebrate the extermination of a *bourgeois*. We, it may be observed, know nothing of this type. Bill Sikes is after the swag and no more, and never professes the slightest regard for the proletariat, if only from ignorance of the word. Ravachol's favourite plan was to enter a village shop kept by some thrifty old recluse, male or female, brain the occupant, and rifle the hoard. At other times, he kept an eye on the graveyards; and where he heard of a recent funeral in which trinkets had been buried with the corpse, he dug down to it at dead of night, and groped for the prize. He was the prince, not to say the demigod, of the murderous *Apaches* who unite crime and party feeling in their profession of faith, and are heard of in Paris, and what is worse sometimes met, to this day. He was caught, by an onslaught of the police on his favourite *café*—but the place was blown up by his band as a punishment for supposed treachery on the part of the proprietor.

His visit, under a strong guard, to the Conciergerie was a Parisian event of the day. The criminal suspects are taken there immediately after arrest to be photographed, full face and profile, and measured on the system invented by M. Bertillon, and now supplemented by the sign manual of the finger-tips, on the Galton plan. The first gives the bone measurements which, as distinct from the fleshy ones known to the tailors, are supposed never to vary. The two together, with their hundreds of thousands of entries, form a collection at which the Recording Angel himself

might not disdain a glance. The excitement of this distinguished presence extended from his fellow criminals to the officials and even to the guards. They crowded round him, heedless of all else, with the exception of one prisoner who kept his head, and escaped by walking downstairs into the street.

Their hero found his way in due course to the guillotine, dancing the *Carmagnole* as he went, and singing the accompaniment, though, as hypercritical performers here and there objected, with a rather faltering voice. While he lay waiting for death, a lady well known in society found means to enter the courtyard and to offer him a bouquet through his prison bars. She afterwards gave me the particulars with great gusto, and made much of a photograph received in exchange for the flowers. It was inscribed: "To Madam ——: homage from one of the vanquished: Koenigstein Ravachol." Of other portraits, also in her unique collection, one represented him in a tattered and torn condition, immediately after his arrest, with crumpled hair, and shirt collar torn all to pieces in the frightful struggle with his captors. Then again he figured as a dandy of the outer boulevards, frock coat, topper, and other masterpieces of the ready-made school. He reeked of the well-known vanity of criminals, and had some excuse for it in a rather striking face.

The Panama scandal is hardly to be ignored in any study of the forces then shaping, for good or ill, the life of France. No doubt the French scheme for cutting the isthmus was largely ruined by

corruption, and in particular by the necessity of squaring the Press. But many were in it, from the distinguished senator who had to fly to England when the cat came out of the bag, to the Radical deputy who tearfully owned to the bribe as but the wherewithal for his daughter's *dot*. M. de Lesseps, to his credit, at first declined to spend a penny for puffery, only to find his mistake when his first appeal for funds became a dead letter owing to the frigid silence of the papers or their open hostility. It fell quite flat with the small investors, not forgetting the maid-of-all-work in the kitchen, whose hoardings are the mainstay of French finance. They save like heroes, and speculate like children; it is astonishing what kind of inducements, in their very triviality gross as a mountain, open, palpable, charm the money out of their pockets.

I once made a small collection of these for my own amusement. One journal asked a hundred thousand francs for its support, and I believe got it. At any rate, when the Company, sadly wiser, issued their second appeal, with the remittance for secret service, the result almost exceeded expectation.

You could not take up a paper without finding something of this sort: "It is near four centuries since Columbus died, yet his name has lost nothing of its splendour. The same splendour, the same popularity, universal and eternal, to-day attend the name of Ferdinand de Lesseps."

Or again. "A Paris Cry. People think of nothing but Panama and of M. de Lesseps. Go

where you will, to the theatre, the restaurant, the confectioner's, the dressmaker's; into ante-chambers, porters' lodges, drawing-rooms, clubs; in the streets, omnibuses, railway stations—Panama! —always Panama! Attend a funeral, a marriage, or a trial—Panama! Meet friend or stranger, still Panama!"

"The Question of the Day.

"'If you were very nice, do you know what you would do?'

"'What, my angel?'

"'Why, you would give me some shares in Panama for my New Year.'

"And observe this is not a wearisome cry which one tries to forget like a street chorus, no, not at all. These three syllables, short, sharp, striking, do not grate on the ear. They sound joyously with the merry clink of gold.

"Panama is the question of the day, and in a little while will become the question of the century, so I, who am no financier, have to do as all the world does, and think in Panama. The day before yesterday the comedian Talbot took his benefit. He is not in the habit of burying his gold in his garden, like Harpagon, the character he had just played, so he pocketed his savings for the night with a 'here goes for Panama.'

"'Well, boys,' said young A. yesterday, at the club, as he fobbed a handsome sum from the green table, 'all this, as the song says, is

For Panama
For Panama
Ah! ah! ah!'

"One of my fellow contributors on this journal who has come into a fortune of 200,000 francs, is at this very moment bawling in my ear, 'Oh, won't I just have a flutter in Panama!' Why, my very valet this morning left me half dressed to talk Panama. Even the worthy people, whose bank is their long stocking, are turning it inside out for M. de Lesseps. 'Take it,' they say, 'take everything; pierce your Isthmus and win us a fortune.' You see they've confidence in him: *parbleu!* who would not, after what he has done?"

This was the puff rattle-pate. Now for the puff serious: "America, uneasy on the score of her prerogatives, opposed the project, and this was not without its effect on some of our fellow citizens. Their ingratitude, however, did not weary the man who had conquered the Isthmus of Suez. An apostle of progress, strong in the truth within him, this young man and old pilgrim of civilization set out with his wonted ardour to bring light to the spirits that walked in darkness. He had hardly appeared before every doubt, every difficulty, vanished. The shrewd Yankees, convinced that they had no longer to fear European intervention, and assured of the neutralization of the canal, are now his allies, and are participating largely in the new enterprise. The subscription is hardly announced, yet demands are coming from every part of the globe. The financiers remember that the original Suez shares, issued at 4000 francs, are now worth 40,000; no wonder, then, that Americans, English, Germans, French, are disputing the honour of joining the Atlantic to the Pacific."

The very political spies were in it, and turned to it as a new branch of their trade. They are a great social force in their way. We have seen, by fairly recent revelations, how often they stand between the capable military officer and his promotion, when his political sympathies happen to be of the wrong sort.

I knew of one who died in a sort of odour of social sanctity, in the sense of never getting found out. She was the daughter of a railway clerk at Lyons, and she married an officer of the garrison, well connected though just as poor as herself. They had a hard struggle to live on his pay, especially as they were obliged to keep up appearances. There was, however, one compensation for her; the marriage eventually took her into a higher circle and made her acquainted with its ways. At first, though, she had her difficulties. Lyons, knowing her origin, was rather shy of the acquaintance; but when she accompanied her husband to Paris she had a better chance, and with her really winning manners, she turned it to the best account. They wanted nothing but a little more money to make them happy, when he was ordered to Italy, only to get killed at Solferino, and to leave her, happily without children, but with no other resource than her widow's allowance from the State. She applied for further assistance, but having no interest (his relatives had never taken the slightest notice of her) the minister was obliged to inform her that he had nothing at his disposal. What was she to do? She had acquired a taste for the pleasures of the capital, and to go

back to Lyons and social obscurity was out of the question.

The spy service was her happy thought. She did not know that spies are rarely engaged for the higher work until they have shown their mettle, and that the list in waiting is a long one. She wrote to the Prefecture to offer her services, and she had to wait five days for a "declined with thanks." But it occurred to her that the best way to find a market might be to show a sample. She knew something of the Faubourg St. Germain, as well as of the quarter of the Champs Élysées; and she soon learned what was going on among declared enemies and pretended friends of the Second Empire. Chance favoured her; a small knot of adventurers, like herself in want of money, were actually getting up a false plot against the government—a plot that like the Sheffield razor of the story, was simply meant to sell. They had found a few dupes among the work-people of the Faubourg St. Antoine, and, altogether taken in by our heroine, they were about to turn her to some account, when she forestalled the compliment at their expense. She wrote to the Prefecture again, though not in her own name, and this time the communication was acknowledged by an official in person, who came to tell her that she might continue her interesting observations. She did so, and with such effect that when the manufacturers of the plot reached the office with their tardy disclosures they were shown to the door. With that she was immediately engaged.

They gave her 3000 francs a year to start with,

and a promise of a rise, so she now did pretty well, and began to save for her old age. Her heaviest expense was the weekly reception which she was obliged to give to keep her place in the world. It was hard work: intimacy with fifty innocent families to have the chance of watching five who were going wrong. After a while the Government began to grow uneasy under the imminent failure of the Mexican expedition, and there were rumours, even at this early period, of an attempt at a Legitimist restoration. She found out that it was no more than the dream of a few enthusiasts, and that the person to be restored had no knowledge of the matter. It was an immense relief to the Emperor; he sent word that she was to be looked after, and they raised her to 9000 francs at a bound. They thought of employing her in Germany, but unfortunately she knew nothing of the language.

Her employers had perfect confidence in her because she had no confidence in them. She never once signed her own name to a receipt or a report. They remonstrated, but she was inflexible, and they had to put up with a sort of *nom de plume*, Lena. She never went to the Prefecture; when she had anything to say that could not be written she summoned an agent to her house. She knew more than she told them; the Empire might not last, and it would be a pretty thing to have her correspondence turned over by the minister of a rival system. When it fell, and the men of the 4th September had the rummaging of the archives, her letters became the talk of Paris, and her signature its mystery.

She went to the new incumbent one day, put her identity to him as a riddle, solved it for him when he gave it up, and asked him if she should go on as before. He could give but one reply, for the spy service survives governments. She was kept on, even after the fall of M. Thiers, and she made herself useful to the Marshal's government by tracking a German colleague of her own sex, who had worked herself into the confidence of General de Cissey, then Minister of War. This fair "curious impertinent" was finding out all sorts of things about the new organizations of the army, when her industry was interrupted by the abrupt dismissal of the General from his post, and by an order to herself to leave Paris by the night train.

Lena died in harness—of a cold caught at a *soirée;* and of the one or two hundred persons who attended the funeral, probably not more than a couple knew that she was anything more than an officer's widow who had lived on her means.

## CHAPTER XVII

### PEOPLE AND THINGS

THE French politicians were not to have the work of reconstruction all to themselves; the ideologists bore a hand in it, and there was many a tug of war between the old faiths and the new. This was especially the case in art. The academical tradition, as represented by Gérôme, Cabanel, Bouguereau, Lefèbvre, and even Meissonier, was at odds with a naturalism still in its period of riot. Manet and even Courbet had led the way of innovation, Bastien-Lepage followed, Degas was perhaps the greatest force of the school, with his marvellous work in the rendering of movement. He never lacked disciples and even devotees, but he had often to wait for buyers. One day Gérôme dropped in to look at the new work, though with his laboured studies of statuesque form he was hardly in a position to enjoy it. But his Eastern sketches in the neighbourhood of Seraglio Point, and his spoils of the bazaars held the market, so, in the circumstances, the visit was something of an act of condescension. Degas waited in vain for a word of praise. At length he could stand it no longer, and a surly "Hein! I suppose it's not Turk enough for you," brought the visit to a close.

A greater than either, Rodin, was still looking

for full recognition. The majority of collectors, who wait for the fact of fame rather than the promise, were still to seek. I once had the honour of breakfasting with him, and I remember my host as a square-set figure in a sort of Sunday suit of ill-fitting black, of which it may be enough to say that it carried out none of his subsequent theories of the function of drapery. I was not qualified for prophecy of his future greatness, but I came away with the impression that I had met a man quite out of the common; and when I afterwards saw his John the Baptist, I began faintly to divine what was coming to pass. I had yet to wait for long years to see one glorious fulfilment in literature —his volume on the cathedrals of France. Reims, Laon, Soissons, Beauvais, in their great sequence of schools and inspiration—alas, what is left of one of them now! It is a book on a subject greater even than art, the soul of a race: "I am an artist and a plebeian, and the cathedrals were built by the artists for the people."

Gustave Doré was another of the interesting figures of the time, as one of its greatest illustrators, but he made a serious mistake in trying, on imperfect training, and more serious defects of nature, to rank as a painter. The academical school would not have him at any price in this character. His sense of colour was almost non-existent—his giant pictures seemed to cumber the wall at the annual shows. It was much the same with his sense of character, his figures seemed all of one family. Racially, if not morally, he exaggerated the note of the brotherhood of man. He

worked desperately hard for the revision of the critical sentence, but towards the last, one cannot but fear, with the certainty that he was working in vain. This led to moods of depression, induced by the very buoyancy of nature that made him keenly alive to the agony of disappointment.

He was seen at his happiest and best at his Sunday-at-homes in the old house in the Faubourg St. Germain. A few people came to a simple dinner, and this was followed by a reception on the same scale. The aged mother took her place at the head of the table, with children to the right and grandchildren to the left. Gustave was the youngest son, and the only one unmarried, but he held the other place of honour as a member of her household. He was still the *gamin* of the family, full of wild animal spirits, which often found vent in mischief, and incurred parental rebuke—"my boy! my boy! don't make such a noise." It pleased the old lady to forget that, since she first talked to him in that way, he had become one of the best known men in France, and it pleased him even more to have it forgotten.

They took their coffee in a sort of domestic studio built in the courtyard. Here, at one step, you passed from Paris to Bohemia, though not exactly to those semi-savage recesses of the country that poor Mürger explored. The light from the ceiling fell on the strangest medley of picturesque disorder ever seen under an artist's roof. This was the room in which Doré drew—he painted elsewhere—and the great central table was heaped up with his sketches on paper or on the block,

and with costly volumes of illustration already published. Scenes of the life of all countries and of all ages were here before you in dazzling profusion. By and by the old servant, Pierre, came in with light refreshments, which one could hardly refuse without giving him pain. The guests, he seemed to think, were as much his as his master's, and he accordingly pushed his tray among them after the fashion of that bygone time to which he so decidedly belonged. He was useful in more ways than one, for Doré unconsciously took him as a model when he wanted a long and somewhat mournfully serious visage, though neither the artist nor his victim seemed to have the slightest idea of the fact. Pierre would turn over dozens of sketches in which he appeared as a praying Crusader, a love-lorn Spaniard, or a thoughtful Jew, without once recognizing himself in his new and fanciful surroundings. The other had simply mistaken memory for imagination in this part of his work. Munkâcsy, the Hungarian painter, was often of the party. Another familiar figure was the little old lady who translated the English texts of the subjects for illustration, and helped Doré with his correspondence.

He was as frolicsome as a child. At one moment he jumped on a chair and played the fiddle; and here it was interesting to note how his love of music—he was no mean performer—gradually got the better of his mere sense of fun, and made him earnest in spite of himself. He began for an antic; he went on to execute some difficult passage of Rossini, his favourite composer, with almost

the strength, the delicacy and the certainty of touch of a soloist at the opera. What would he do next? No one could tell, himself least of all. As it turned out, perhaps, he was going to sing. He gave no warning—not a cough was heard; but just started from the place where he happened to be when the fancy came into his head. You might listen or not, as you liked: he was not singing to please you, but himself, and the room was almost big enough to allow you to strike up on your own account in another corner. Sometimes it was a quaint rigmarole on the theme of "a plain woman for my taste":—

> For beauty 'tis a thing that passes,
> But plainness lasts for evermore.

"Didn't I tell you," says the mother, "that he's only a great boy?"

It was good going while it lasted: "all shall die."

There came a time when he took to his bed in a fit of melancholy, due to the lack of both official and critical appreciation. The mother felt that it was time for strong measures, and she went straight to the Minister of Fine Arts, and told him that her boy was dying for want of the Cross of the Legion of Honour. The Cross was given, and he recovered at once. For all that, I think, it was sheer heartbreak that so prematurely laid him low.

There was a welter of new schools in literature, but hardly one out of which any living soul could

find a use, till Barrès and Bazin settled down to their work. Most of the earlier novelties deserved all they got at the hands of Nordau. One was a sort of school of the first personal pronoun, for the worship of the noble self. Considering the status of its founders as human beings, this must have been wholly an effort of faith. Others, perhaps in a natural deduction, stood for the littleness of life. These called themselves the Impassives, their guiding principle was that of saying nothing and lying low. They differed only from their more distinguished followers of fable, in saying too much. The Mystics had some vogue for a while, under a creature, half painter, half writer, and whole crank, who called himself the Sar Peladan —the first title because it suggested a descent from "the royal sage Sardanapalus." He even shaved for the part. The worst infirmity of all of them was their affectation of a regenerating mission. There was more to uplift the soul of a nation in a single song of Theresa than in all the works and days of the whole gang.

Without precisely intending it, Theresa had been a sort of mainstay of the Second Empire. She kept the masses in good humour, and was of more use to Napoleon III than a dozen legions. She might have associated herself with him in the famous boast: "As to order, I will answer for that." Her "Nothing is Sacred for a Sapper" helped to reconcile the people to the army, and her "Bearded Woman" to reconcile them to themselves. The Emperor sent for her to sing to him, and gave her a substantial memento of the meeting. She

was not beautiful, grace was not a word in her vocabulary, but she had abundant humour and a well-trained voice of extraordinary power, which she deliberately threw out of gear for the production of the most unheard-of effects. She sang ordinary songs in an extraordinary manner, deliberately distorting the final note of some cooing chorus into the bass of a fog-horn with catarrh. It was art in its negation of itself, and supremely welcome to a public bored to death by the monotony of its pleasures. Her gestures matched the note, and the two together constituted "Theresa's trick." That trick is now known to every *cabotine* of them all, and its monetary value has sunk under the excess of supply.

She was born in Paris of very poor parents: her father played the fiddle at the barrier halls. She learned his airs as he practised them, and sang them to herself for want of something better to do. The music-halls were growing, as they have since grown the world over, from back rooms to gilded saloons. Theresa thought she would try her fortune with them, and she obtained an engagement at the Alcazar in a company which she described as a pitiable collection of the unknown. Their main line was sentiment; and much against her will she followed the fashion. The company supped together on New Year's Eve, and, to amuse them, in strict confidence, she hit on the idea of giving her "Flower of the Alps" in a sort of rag-time. The lackadaisical words and air of the original were preserved, but the new manner of rendering them expressed her utter contempt

for both. She was rapturously encored, and this time, having got the wretched Flower down, she proceeded to jump on it, in the passion of her anger and disdain. When she left the table the director of a rival house sidled up to her with the whisper of an engagement.

Willingly; but in what line?

Burlesque.

Nonsense; I shall never get a hearing, they want sentiment, you know.

I daresay; but will you do it?

Why not? but you are making a mistake.

Leave that to me.

In less than a year she was earning almost any sum she had the face to ask.

It was a fishwife tearing the poetry of the keepsakes to tatters. It pleased everybody—the poor by its savage irony, the others by its appeal to their sense of a general emptiness of things. The loud and deliberately vulgar woman became the favourite vocalist of a cynical age.

She married and retired, but came back again, years after Sedan, to sing her old clients into heart and faith for better times. Her favourite theme was marriage as a patriotic duty: *Mariez vous!* France's best hope was in her children: let her see to it that the children were there.

Everybody with the slightest pretension to influence was at work on the revival of the national spirit, each in his own way. The pulpit became patriotic as a matter of course, but it did not take its proper place in the leadership of the

movement because reconstruction had brought but a sword between Church and State. In some quarters, even now, the patriotism is rather that of the old order than of the new. The too-little known M. Maurras, a force in literature, seems only to love his country in proportion as he hates Jews, foreigners, democrats and wellnigh everybody but the King and the Pope.

Père Didon lived to take a more truly catholic view in the non-dogmatic sense, but he had to suffer for it. I heard him preach at St. Philippe du Roule, and could not help feeling at the time that he was on dangerous ground. His theme was the extremely difficult one for a Catholic, the reconciliation between religion and science, and he seemed to do wonders with it while we were under the spell of his oratory. But suddenly, in the full tide of his popularity, he was silenced by an order from Rome, and banished to a distant convent in Corsica, with a strict injunction to hold his tongue. He did so for a whole year, when he was released, but only for foreign travel, and he never offended in the same way again. It was the most dramatic incident of its time, and it had lasting effects on modernism and all other movements of the kind.

Père Monsabré, another famous preacher, made sure of his ground from the first in his Lenten sermons at Nôtre Dame. He left his cell once a year for this duty, and his coming was the event of the sacred season. When Hyacinthe apostatized (for strict Catholics always maintain that he did no less) the Church looked round for another

intellectual champion and found him in the fiery Dominican. He came like a special gift of Providence—he was an Ultramontane of the Ultramontanes—an antidote to the Gallican bane, and he defended Rome and the Council through thick and thin. The disasters of the war were a trial for him and his order, but he saved the reputation of both by showing that he was essentially a Frenchman in feeling, if not always in faith.

To characterize him according to Catholic notions, he was a St. Thomas Aquinas for the crowd. He had formed himself on the model of that giant theologian who undertook to review all the truth known to the world and to harmonize it with the teachings of the Roman Church. The *Summa Theologiæ* was his second Bible; and his mission was to make its teaching as familiar to babes as to the wise. Like its author, he was nothing if not argumentative, logical, a system builder. The occasional sermon was in no way to his taste; with few exceptions his discourses belonged to one vast series, and were but so many finely fitting parts of a majestic structure of faith. For years he preached on the Creed alone; and when I heard him was still in its opening passage, though he had filled another volume of his works.

Being a popularizer, his style was familiar. The language, however, was choice, and truths divine seemed to come mended from that tongue with its French of the Academy tempered by the little mannerisms of the man of the world.

Père Hyacinthe was of course a declared rebel, but his fate showed how difficult it is for a priest

of our time to play the part of Luther over again, and to leave one Church for a commanding position in another of his own making or his own choice. He professed to be an Old Catholic of the school of Döllinger, but as he had to take root somewhere he entered into communion with the English establishment, and even placed himself under one of its Colonial bishops—ruling, I think, from Gibraltar. He used to hold Sunday services in a lecture hall in the Latin Quarter, hard by the Pantheon, but they lacked the mystical influence of the Roman pomp. How different this setting from the stately one of Nôtre Dame, which he filled with worshippers in his great day, and where his word was law, just because it was not his, but only the voice of a whole hierarchy of sanctified figures. On his lecture platform he was but one more recusant at the best, with a doctrine more or less of his own contriving. He was unpleasantly reminded of the difference by the indignant faithful who seldom failed to attend for the purpose of bringing the services into contempt. Well-bred Frenchmen have a peculiar habit in matters of this sort. Nothing can exceed the decorum of their disorder at public meetings not to their liking. They neither hiss nor "boo." On the contrary, they seem to listen with a rapt attention, until the moment comes when they think proper to draw out a silver whistle, blow a single note on it, short and sharp, and then restore it to its case, to listen with the same attention as before. This is organized interruption; and, when the time has come to stop it, the offender suffers himself to be conducted

to the door by another well-bred person of the opposite persuasion, and retires raising his hat. I do not say it describes the demeanour of all classes of dissentients; it is only the way of those who are solicitous of the proprieties.

The sermon was all that the sermon of a great preacher should be in manner and matter, but somehow it seemed woefully lacking in its scenic effects. The bare benches and whitewashed walls made but a poor substitute for the arches and altars of the great cathedral. Monsabré in his statuesque robes of white flannel, though far less of a fine figure of a man, was a much more impressive personality than this tall middle-aged gentleman in a frock-coat, with nothing of the livery of his vocation but his tie.

On his retirement from the Roman communion, Hyacinthe married an American lady of charming presence and agreeable manners. Both by her nationality and her position as the wife of a clergyman who had his way to make in his calling, she could hardly help showing signs of great energy of character. Whenever her husband's bishop passed through Paris she took care to have him to luncheon, and on one occasion it was my good fortune to be of the party. It would have made a chapter for Trollope. The fare was all that a lover of good cheer could desire, and the delicate attentions it implied were accentuated by the deferential amiability of the hostess. She smiled, I will not say with counterfeited glee, at every prelatical joke; and it was "Yes, Bishop" or "No, Bishop" at every turn, when he laid down the law.

Meanwhile France was beginning to seek in colonial expansion compensation of a kind for the lost provinces at home. She was active in this kind of adventure both in Asia and in Africa, in the latter mainly with the help of M. de Brazza, a naval lieutenant, of Italian origin, in her service. Stanley's work had shown that the Congo was one of the mightiest rivers for commerce and empire, yet France had no direct access to it from her West African possession. De Brazza was sent out on a secret mission, though nominally only as an explorer at large, and he came back with a whole sheaf of treaties with native chiefs giving him a short cut to the stream across their territories. The treaties probably cost no more to negotiate than a liberal outlay in rum and beads; but they were signed, if only with a mark. Stanley was furious. They had been obtained, he said, largely by information, and by still more substantial assistance, supplied by himself for purely international ends. He had traced the course of the river for mankind, and here was France trying to get a footing on her own account. Her agent might have perished on his way, without the aid and comfort he received when his stores had given out.

It was a pretty quarrel, but Stanley was no diplomatist, and he managed it badly at the start. He took the opportunity of a mere congratulatory dinner offered to himself by an American club in Paris, to deliver a bitter attack on the French explorer, whose name had been carefully excluded from the list of guests. He began by telling us that he had met his destined victim on the boulevard in the

morning, and said to him : " My dear friend, I am going to give you your finishing stroke." Of course this announcement froze us all in our places as we sat. We did not wish to see anyone receive a stroke of that, or any other kind ; we wanted only to hear and make pleasant speeches, and to have just so much intellectual excitement as might facilitate the process of digestion. Besides, by the very position of some of the party, we were bound not to assist in the fray. Many were influential, official, scientific, or financial persons ; in fact, amongst the seventy or eighty there was scarcely one who had not something to lose by being identified with a stand-up fight. So, as poor Stanley went on, the silence grew more profound, and though there was a cheer at the end, rightly interpreted it was a cheer of thankfulness for a happy release. The finishing stroke had certainly failed. The papers of the next day were by turns angry and elate—angry with Stanley for his exhibition of what was called *la brutalité Américaine* in his unhappy allusions to Brazza's personal appearance when he met him on the Congo; elate at the thought that he never would have been in such a rage, unless his rival had secured some great triumph for France.

The best of it was De Brazza contrived to be there to hear the speech. Stanley had hardly got under way when the door opened, and the other, with a deprecating bow to the company for the interruption, glided into a vacant chair and sat out the whole oration. When it was over, he apologized for his intrusion. Happening to pass,

he had heard the welcome voice of his brother explorer with a mention of his own name, and he had been unable to resist the temptation of dropping in to pay his respects. And, since there he was, might he now crave permission to say a few words in his own defence. Then, with the same perfect courtesy and finish of manner, he went on to express his profound obligations to his fellow traveller for the gift of a few pairs of boots and pots of provisions to a colleague at his utmost need, and to promise that if ever the situation was reversed, it would be his pride and glory to repay in kind. With this, and with a few other ironical touches, he bowed himself out.

Stanley had unquestionably been worsted in the first bout, but he was not the man to sit down under defeat. His sheer faith in his will was enormous. He once said to me that, even under sentence of death, he would never take it lying down, he would be dragged to the scaffold by main force, hoping for the miracle.

A few days after he invited Brazza to breakfast at the Hôtel Meurice, with a dozen or so of friends, including Sir Owen Lanyon and a few of the correspondents. It was only to join battle once more. On the removal of the cloth they fell to, at first with maps and plans, afterwards with wine spilt on the board to indicate the course of the great river, franc pieces for the settlements, and spent lucifer matches for the forest routes.

"What right had you to hoist your flag here?" said Stanley, dabbing a coin in the puddle; "we were there before you."

"I never hoisted it there at all," returned the other, boldly dabbing his coin lower down, "but I got over yonder before you."

"Impossible; you could never have done it from French territory in a three days' march."

"Why not? Permit me to draw the bend of the river as it really runs," and with nimble forefinger he changed the course of his puddle to suit his view of the case.

At times some had streams on their own account and all talked together. It was quite amusing to study the different characteristics of the men at the table. Brazza with his long, thin, Quixote-like face, and the nervous animation of his Southern race; Stanley with a quieter manner, and eyes that seemed all light whenever he thought he had scored. The placid Sir Owen Lanyon, as an English official, was of course "out of it," but he watched the game, while the correspondents, with a meek air of seeking nothing but the improvement of their minds, artfully kept the players up to the mark. The lieutenant was led into admissions which made it pretty clear that he had been sent to Africa in a twofold capacity. His position enabled his government, at need, to disavow him as a mere agent of the Belgian Association, or to back him as an officer of France.

Stanley had scrambled through on points.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### VICTORIAN LONDON

MY next stage was London. I saw that with a few years more of it I should have to choose my naturalization of the spirit and remain English or become French. It is as difficult to have the two natures in equal possession as to have the two languages. The French point of view would gradually claim me for its own if I stayed, so I kept England as a country and France as a friend. This implies no moral judgment between them; it is only a statement of preferences biassed, and rightly, by feeling and the claims of habit.

So I made the great change, crossed the sea with my simple belongings, and again went into chambers in Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was London, and for me, as English born and bred, it was the larger world.

There was an interest of another kind which brought me into touch once more with the Victorian epoch of my earlier years. I could not have missed it for anything: Victorian I was for good or ill, and that epoch of history would for ever leave its mark. It was ageing: there was grey in its locks; we had yet to celebrate the first Jubilee; as it stood it was a whole and self-contained

manifestation of the human spirit. If it had no longer the same cocksure confidence in itself, it was still fairly well satisfied, and inclined to report 'no change.' The great strivings, the entirely satisfying ideals of the opening of the reign had lost some of their driving force, but enough remained to give the sense of vitality. The period was still in a state kindred to that known in physiology as living on one's fat. In famines, we are told, the portly people hold out longest because of their reserve of adipose matter : there is some nutriment in the stomach if there is none in the larder. The good Victorians believed that they had the wherewithal in Tennyson and Browning, in Ruskin and Carlyle, and even with their inheritance of Adam Smith, commonly supposed to be no digestive for the others, though he was a moralist of the first order in his least-known book. These were for law and regulation, the ordered life, the ethic of conduct, morals, duty, the traditional pieties—benevolent or at any rate beneficent capital, submissive labour, wealth without luxury, poverty without revolt. The nineteenth century and the progress of the age held the field, and had yet to become "this so-called nineteenth century" of the stump orator.

What some pessimists were able to think of it was far from being the general note. Their Latter Day view, then a heresy, now almost a commonplace, till Alfred Russel Wallace redeemed its reputation with his *Wonderful Century*, came out, quite recently, in full and perfect echo. Edward Carpenter, the recluse of our northern hills, had to

return thanks for congratulations on his seventieth birthday, and did it in these terms :

" Coming to my first consciousness, as it were of the world at the age of sixteen (at Brighton in 1860), I found myself—and without knowing where I was —in the middle of that strange period of human evolution, the Victorian age, which in some respects, one now thinks, marked the lowest ebb of modern civilized society : a period in which not only commercialism in public life, but cant in religion, pure materialism in science, futility in social conventions, the worship of stocks and shares, the starving of the human heart, the denial of the human body and its needs, the huddling concealment of the body in clothes, the ' impure hush ' on matters of sex, class division, contempt for manual labour, and the cruel barring of women from every natural and useful expression of their lives, were carried to an extremity of folly difficult for us now to realize.

" As I say, I did not know where I was. I had no certain tidings of any other feasible state of society than that which loafed along the Brighton parade or tittle-tattled in drawing-rooms. I only knew I hated my surroundings. I even sometimes, out of the midst of that absurd life, looked with envy, I remember, on the men with pick and shovel in the roadway and wished to join in their labour ; but between, of course, was a great and impassable gulf fixed, and before I could cross that I had to pass through many stages. I only remember how the tension and pressure of those years grew and increased—as it might do in an old boiler when the

steam-ports are closed, and the safety-valve shut down; till at last, and when the time came that I could bear it no longer, I was propelled with a kind of explosive force, and with considerable velocity, right out of the middle of the nineteenth century and far on into the twentieth!"

Tennyson was the great singer of that earlier age, and its great poet, say what you like of him. It suits some of the new schools to run him down, but without imputing motives one may say that they lack the standpoint for judgment. They were born too late for that. The best judges of a man are his contemporaries. They alone know what new thing he has brought into the world. Instinctively they turn to him for the fresh concept of life and nature that helps them. The critic of a new time, who inherits the concept only as platitude at the best, is in no position to feel the rapture of the sense of service.

The Victorian Laureate simply burst on his own generation, with his classic form plus the passion for nature, his pantheon of gods and goddesses who were all breathing a breath of life which they had not enjoyed since the time of the Greeks, or at any rate the Elizabethans. The stuffing and the Berlin wool of the intervening period seemed to be all cast aside. There was a most exhilarating sense of great problem, and great solution to match —England still aspiring to save Europe by her example, a little smug and pretentious no doubt, but with all the dignity of a conviction.

Only those who lived even as mere boys and girls in their teens at the opening of the Crimean

war, can realize the hopes and the aspirations with which the country plunged into that great adventure. The lover's cry in *Maud* sounded throughout the whole Anglo-Saxon world, and Edgar Poe, no mean judge in life and art, worshipped its author. It was the young queen on the throne, unmatched as a symbol of the purification of manners since Spenser's dream of Faerie. Laugh as one likes now—and it is but a forced laugh at best—she was the very soul of all the loyalties of the age, another Una with the lion as her henchman and arm of the flesh. What matter that it now suggests only the lion of the royal arms: there was the faith that atones for all.

Our poet lived to grow old—who can help that, or would if he could! Other times other manners. The *Idylls of the King* followed *Maud* in its due sequence of the pitiless years and their pitiless disenchantments. It was a true enchantment when it came—that is enough.

The liveliest image of the change is to be found in the comparison between the Magda of Sudermann and the whole sisterhood of the Tennysonian type, especially the Guinevere, by this time old enough to be her grandmother many times removed. Guinevere's lapse is her sin: "Thy golden head, my pride in happier summers, at my feet"; we all know it by heart. Magda's lapse is her whim, at worst but her indiscretion; and she has no forgiveness to ask. She has come back to the old home just to see the old people, if anything else only to forgive them for their ban that with a less self-satisfied nature might have spoiled her career.

Each type was true in its time and of its time, and there is nothing to be said for or against it on account of the mere accident of the setting. Truth to the life of the moment is all you can ask of any piece of literature. "Tennyson seemed immense to his contemporaries," says a modern critic, who rashly undertakes to fix him up for posterity. Immense he was. Magda may live to become a hussy yet: in such matters there is no last word. And above all avoid cant phrases: Mid-Victorian, now a reproach at the service of every puny whipster of the chair, was the word of the spell in its hour. Its essential poet has his vision of a day of supersession, and the courage to take it as in the order of things:

> Come, my friends,
> 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
> Push off, and sitting well in order smite
> The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
> To sail beyond the sunset and the baths
> Of all the western stars, until I die.
> It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
> It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
> And see the great Achilles whom we knew.

Carlyle was another man of the moment in the sense of one who, in his fidelity to it, was yet a man of all time. Such high teachings go to the making of great nations, such occasional lapses are but the weaknesses of the flesh. He blew a trumpet blast for the battle of life, and his foibles were but his pauses to recover his wind. Why affect to repent of him now? Ruskin—as art critic, dead if you like—as seer of a new political economy, safe and sound for all time. The Brontës,

Mid-Victorian for the worst only in some dowdy phrase that has lost its force of appeal, but great for ever in bringing a new thing into the world just when it was wanted. Theirs was the Wellington touch on the iron string of duty, the sense of the novel as the epic of life. Dickens—what a revelation in new departures of the same kind! the apotheosis of the common man, till then but a low-comedy super for the background of the piece; Thackeray in his greater work, and again with the sense of fiction as the epic of a whole age of manners as vast in its sweep as a picture of Italian pageantry.

Browning will need the same charity of construction—has indeed already come to need it, now that so many have begun to make wry faces over a too cheery optimism which threatens to pall. His was pre-eminently a sane genius sufficing to itself in its supreme contentment with his time as he found it, and his perfect faith and trust in all the times to come. The greatest visionary in the finer sense of the word, and withal the greatest diner out.

I saw something of him through his intimacy with the Corkrans, then settled in London, who had known him and his household in Paris in his day of little things. His life in Paris was simplicity itself. The two poets, husband and wife, and the husband's father and sister lived for a time under the same roof. The old man was allowanced in pocket-money, partly as there was then not much money of any kind going round, but also because he could not be trusted to keep any of it that came

to his share, the moment he reached the bookstalls on the quays. At last it had to be little more than just enough for his omnibus. For all that his daughter, Miss Browning, who was treasurer, had often to yield to a piteous appeal for a few coppers over to enable him to complete a bargain on which he had already left the deposit of his fare.

Every day's wanderings seemed to yield him a type for his sketch-book, either from memory of his life in England, or from fresh observation. To this day Miss Alice Corkran, the last representative of one branch of her family, has in her possession these precious jottings which were the delight of her infancy when she stood little higher than the old man's knee. The figures are dabbed in as though with primitive colours fresh from the earth, the descriptive legend sometimes issues balloonwise from their lips. What is it all, in its deeper significance, but the *Men and Women* of the son in the sketch to which he has given the place of honour of the series ?

> He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
> The man who slices lemons into drink,
> The coffee-roaster's brasier and the boys
> That volunteer to help him turn its winch.
> He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
> And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,
> And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.

That was the old man on his rambles, with one or other of the Corkran children to bear him company. His favourite, Alice, was afterwards the charming writer for children of both growths. One day the pair were missing at the dinner hour, and

both families set up the hue and cry—to find them at last by the riverside, the old man sketching for his life, and the child at his elbow munching a cake. Any bit of character that came his way was irresistible to him, and he had to make a note of it at once. In one book of the kind—before me as I write—I find a rough customer with dishevelled hair and all-pervading scowl, labelled "Barabbas." Further on it is "The Tragedy," suggesting playful reflections on his son's not altogether successful struggle for the honours of dramatic authorship. "I say, Dick," runs the legend, "my brother Tom's been writing a tragedy. Very deep one I can assure you, for none of us understand a line of it. One line is not to be laughed at: it displays a wonderful acquaintance with the Copernican system."

After this we have "The Swindlers," the time-honoured confidence trick, in a setting of the manners and customs of the day.

Many drawings are untitled, and we have to depend on the dialogue for the cue: "My brother —? read son—isn't one of them that write poetry by the pailfull—when he sits down to write he always takes time to consider, he always thinks first."

Then the lawyers have their turn, in a set of skits racy in character and fun. There is even a dim adumbration of Sludge the Medium in—"Master's comp'tnts—and, when you've done with it—says he will thank you for one of them tables. Some of the farmers from Salisbury have been laying a wager of a supper and two dozen of wine, that they'll make it dance." Even "A

Genealogy of Abdel-Kader" has its place, copied apparently from "Galignani, 13 December, 1852," though this is mere scrap-book lore. But the rest, and by no stretch of fancy, is the germ in Browning the father, of Browning the son, without the touch for genius that was Nature's own secret, and probably will be to the end of time.

Perhaps, with a better chance, the old bank clerk might himself have left something for the anthologies. Let that be as it may, he was well and generously inspired, when he determined to do his best for his son by giving him a University education. Without this the young poet might have found his way too hard, for with it he was often sore beset. He might dare be himself in new methods, since he was of the cultured band, and his eccentricities compelled toleration at the least. So, from the first, he had all the benefit of the classic environment. He nothing common did, or mean, to earn his living. He was spared the blacking factory of Dickens; and though even this proved a blessing in disguise to the novelist, as a matter of choice it would have been a rash bid for success, only to be justified by the result. The "poetic child" wants a good deal of nursing, yet it must be of the right sort. The wrong throws it all out of gear.

I have often thought that Watts-Dunton took too much pains with his ministrations of this kind. He seemed to cure his nurslings of every bad habit, including the genius. They were reclaimed to respectability, but too often at the expense of the divine fire. Yet he might have been warned, if he

had condescended to be aware of it, by the reformation of the last of the Cruikshanks—a sad reprobate of the coarser kind in the earlier and successful part of his career. He soaked in low taverns, and too often could only get out of them with a lurch. One in particular, "The Black-Jack," which was very much to his taste, was demolished many years ago when Clare Market was swept out of existence. Savage knew it, and perhaps Johnson; Turpin and Sheppard certainly left unpaid scores on its slate.

When the artist was captured by the teetotallers, greatly to the improvement of his manners—his gift of caricature seemed to become part of the spoil. He never realized his loss, for to the last he gloried in the reformation without realizing its effects. He ostentatiously drank Thames from the tap at public banquets, and sometimes made himself up, with his dinner-napkin twisted round his brow, into a travesty of his old and wicked self. The pilgrim to the shrine of his house in the Hampstead Road, was taken up to his study to see and smell the old foul pipe he had smoked in his state of sin, the battered pewter from which he had quaffed his beer. For all that the work of his period of redemption was the sorriest stuff—witness the appalling picture which he bequeathed to The National Gallery, much to its consternation, and which had to be hidden away in the cellars after a brief career in the light of day. His subject was the curse of the drinking habit, from the cradle to the grave. The scheme of composition was a sort of chess-board with a moral against alcohol in

every square. You began with a christening scene —the family party toasting the child's health on the return from church. Next came godfather's silver mug, filled with devil's brew, mild at the start, as a moral against the temptations of boyhood. Early manhood and the festive board was the subject of the next compartment. Middle age and the tortures of gout took their turn, and so on, until you came to a suggestion at least of a wind up in spontaneous combustion for the final scene. It was pitifully poor from first to last, without a trace of the old quality of his touch.

I am quite aware that years before that, and still belonging to his age of repentance, his series of etchings called *The Bottle, or the Drunkard's Fate* had something of the old fire. But the difference was due to the fact that he was then in his period of struggle and occasional lapse, and that his angel of darkness was still giving the other one a pretty hard time.

Watts-Dunton's exceedingly well-meant attentions entailed much the same consequences on his most distinguished inmate. Swinburne was no doubt sorely in need of them, from the point of view of civilized and decent society, for he had sometimes suffered himself to become the butt of the meanest of mankind. I remember once declining an invitation to see him in his hour of weakness, offered to me by a creature whom, in his sober senses, he would hardly have recognized with a nod, if he had been able to recognize him at all. Watts-Dunton changed all this, and in his quiet home at The Pines gave his friend the dignity of

surroundings suited to his standing in society and to his position in literature.

The reformation was complete and absolute. The day was laid out as it is laid out in the monastery, and to complete the likeness, the meal was often eaten in silence. When it was over, if the occasional guest at luncheon was to the poet's liking—and nobody was invited without his permission—he unbent charmingly in talk about literature at large, and in the display of choice pieces from his fine collection of old editions. The best part of the day was for its close, when host and guest, and later on the host's charming wife, spent the quiet evening together, rarely, I believe, with a single visitor from the outside. The change from the Swinburne of the earlier days was nothing less than a metamorphosis of the old type. He was a new being.

But for him, I think, Watts-Dunton would have extended his interest to the literature of the day. In his view, Swinburne not only closed the Victorian cycle, but left no successor, and I think that in his heart of hearts he drew another line of the same sort in regard to his own critical labours. The immediate present was simply red ruin and the breaking up of laws.

Until age and growing infirmities consigned him to the retirement of his own home he was the most delightful companion for all who had the privilege of his friendship. He was often a visitor at our house when I lived with the Corkrans in Mecklenburgh Square; but, on the strict condition that we should bar all other hospitality for that night,

he gave us of his best. He was a bit of an egoist, not of himself exactly, but rather of the entire past to which he belonged. All *Aylwin*—his last work of importance, and with the giants of early Victoria for its characters—was implicit in his talk. The book is unintelligible without a key, but with it you get access to the Victorian age in its day of power. He was of that little circle of which Whistler was the brightest ornament, and he seemed to feel that nothing of note had happened since " Jimmy " ceased to make salads and epigrams, and kept his flatterers on their good behaviour with the sharpness of his tongue.

Swinburne was in every way better for his new environment, in peace and dignity of life, but it cannot be denied that the change marked a diminution of his powers. The best belonged to the period of his wild youth before the arch-reformer of genius had taken him in hand.

## CHAPTER XIX

### LITERATURE AND JOURNALISM

THE transition between these and the Mid-Victorians proper came in, I think, with Stevenson. But I did not know how transitional he was till I came to London and studied him on his own soil. In a foreign country an English book is but an importation smacking of the voyage and the change of temperature. For the perfect flavour, you want the very air of the place of origin. Let Tauchnitz do what he may, *Pickwick* under the Pyramids is rather a struggle for atmosphere. In spite of Stevenson's bias towards the old literature his outlook was entirely fresh. I began to realize how much had passed since Charles Reade was the newest thing in romance. "Yet it moves" is as true of literature as of the sphere. Compare a philosophic novel of Voltaire with one of Henry James: the former a mere didactic principle that could have been stated in two lines, with no more construction than a steel chain, nor of character than a box of chessmen, the latter a triple distillation of both in sweet and fanciful thought.

Though a cosmopolitan, James is still hard to understand without his British setting. Even in the more purely American work, he is still the Briton studying a foreign type. I remember a

chat with him at the club in which I asked him as a kind of favour to cross to America, and to stand and deliver on the question: "How do you like our country, sir?" He did go there shortly after, as we know, and with precious results, but I claim no rights in the happy thought. I was afterwards indebted for piquant, if only commonplace, particulars of his life and work to a rather rather famous lion hunter of the other sex, who had stalked him at Rye with a letter of introduction. She reported on him as a peripatetic of dictation to a shorthand writer, with occasional lapses to the sofa or the arm-chair. He trod his subject for its innermost juices, and occasionally, as with the other wine pressers, was glad to mop his brow when his task was done. I give it as I had it, and I am willing to admit there was a tinge of malice in it as, on her own admission, he did not take kindly to the intrusion. "As for his style," she said, "well, he reminds me of the—how do you call it? you know what; and yet there are not even two Incomprehensibles —in this case—but only one, for there could be no double of Henry James."

Kipling came upon me as a glorious innovator—the Empire in the, till then unconsidered trifle of its maker, the common man. This brought us abreast of the time with its sense of the poetry of steam and electricity, and its power to make a stoker's fire-shovel as picturesque as any implement in Homer. It still atones for all later aberrations when society persuaded him that he was a prophet on a mount.

I met him but once, at a grand dinner given by Mr. A. P. Watt, the Literary Agent, to his young men. Watt was the Moses who brought the successful person of letters out of Grub Street, and put him in line with the merchant prince for results. Pope managed to get ten thousand out of his *Iliad*, but it was only the exception that proved the rule of poverty and neglect. How many thousands of writers have had to part with masterpieces for a song to the Lintots of their time! Think of the long procession of them with toil, envy, want, and all the rest of it, for their portion, till this genial wolf of the trade,—for Watt had graduated in a publisher's office—saw there was business to be done by going over to the lambs. Think of Dickens, with his ever victorious start, yet glad to pledge himself for future masterpieces at a trifle in three figures, and still a loser in highest possibles when Forster had procured some sort of revision of the terms. But for Watt or his followers in the field, the Kiplings, the Barries, the Bennetts, and Wells might to-day have been in the same plight, or worse. "There he goes," groaned a victim of the old system, "on a penny 'bus ride to Paternoster Row, with a manuscript in his pocket, and a small fortune for his own share."

The very pugilists have their agents now, and Carpentier enters the ring with the certainty, win or lose, of an endowment for his night's work. Though Tom Sayers had his modest annuity, and his little six-roomer in Camden Town all to himself, it was due to the public generosity. Most of the veterans of that craft were glad to haunt

the sporting taverns for their drinks, and their free lunches of bread and cheese munched minus the teeth lost in the service. The very poets and stars of the earlier music-halls had no better prospect, until the agent came to their aid, to enable the author of "Hi-tiddly-hi-ti," and "If you want to know the time ask a p'liceman" to die a fundholder.

It was all new to me as a returned prodigal of opportunity, and I settled down to the sheer enjoyment of it, leaving the moral to take care of itself. London, London, the mighty and the rare! that was enough—a cinema effect of figures in lightning movement across the screen, out of nothingness for a moment's joy of life, and back to it again within the second, the best image of the whole course of man. A crumb of mellow cheese under the microscope may be offered as a variant, for the spectacle of a feverish energy of being to no particular end or aim.

I wrote a little here and there by way of getting a foothold, and soon joined the editorial staff of *The Daily News*. Frank Hill was then in the chair. Though with scant leisure for other work, he had to his credit a volume on the leading writers and politicians of the day, laboured with a somewhat too manifest art for epigram and point. Chained to his desk, he seemed to shiver at all contact with the outside world, and he had the nervousness and irritability of his state of isolation. There was a legend in the office of a tiff between him and Pigott—not the other one, of course—but in his later years Examiner of Plays. Pigott,

then a leader writer for the paper, was of the same sensitive cast as his chief, who on this occasion had put him to the torture of a snub. He said nothing at the time but walked straight to his room, only to return in a few minutes to breathe this through the half-opened door. "Hill, I think it right to tell you that I consider your last observation uncalled for." "Oh, do you?" groaned Hill in the same dead-and-alive tone. "Yes," gasped Pigott with another prodigious effort; and the incident was closed. So we exchange cartels of defiance in these degenerate times. It is still the common note. Formidable in print, with the whole armoury of attack and defence at command, writers are often nothing without their pens. A child shall lead them; and happily its mother almost invariably does. Hill was a journalistic recluse, with a sole concern for the interest of his literary columns. When the three leaders and the reviews were off his mind, the rest was left to the sub-editor with but two or three men under his command. The order of importance has since been entirely reversed. The sub-editor as newsgatherer is now the chief authority, and the literature has to take care of itself.

Hill had Herbert Paul on his staff: and prided himself on successful overtures to Andrew Lang. Both were wonders, Paul chiefly in politics, Lang in everything but that, for he had no sympathy with the policy of the paper. Paul was a Balliol man of the Jowett group, with all the savagery of Swift in his style, and much of his power. He was widely and deeply read in modern as in ancient

literature, and he had a prodigious memory which he cultivated by never taking a note. He dipped his quill in a liquid fortified, I suspect, with a dash of vitriol, and went his way without an erasure. At a moment's notice he could give a sympathetic estimate of a great writer in the whole range of his work, or make out, for a political opponent, a passport to the shades for future use, with marks of identification omitting no single particular of turpitude. His health finally broke down under the strain of a series of historical works written too closely to time, yet showing not the slightest trace of it in craftsmanship.

Lang was another person of the same, and perhaps even a wider range, matching the versatility of the players in *Hamlet*. His touch was feathery in its lightness, if his social satire was not always in the happy mean of urbanity and good nature. He was of the few who write with as much ease as they are read with pleasure. I have known him get his subject from Hill, and there and then sit down at the corner of the table to turn out his leader well within the hour. When it was done, he gathered up his slips from the floor, and without a glance of revision sent them upstairs to the printer. This, as also I imagine the readiness of Paul, came from the familiarity with great studies. His leaders and fancies were but chips from the workshop in which he had fashioned his thoughts on history, philosophy, folklore and what not during the earlier part of the day. His journalism was but a by-product, yet in more ways than one, it sometimes exceeded the value

of the staple. His letters, as I once took occasion to say, had the same charm of spontaneity. They came from a storehouse of often, in my judgment, wrong-headed opinions, which he cherished mainly for the sake of their picturesque charm. He was not a Scotch Tory for nothing—and I fancy that would have been his label in a confession of faith. "I could prophesy if I cared," he once wrote to me. He seemed to think that ours was, and always would be, a horrid rough-and-tumble sort of a world, with its only solace in art for life's sake. World-bettering on the big scale was futile, and only made you bad company.

He seemed to dread boredom above all other things. Chance acquaintance met at dinner, hostesses who wanted to use him as a nice man for afternoon tea, found him trying. He would slip away from the front drawing-room with its buzz, on pretence of looking at a picture in the antechamber, and thence make his escape.

His treatment of an unfortunate American who got him to dinner, white tie and all, at "The Cheshire Cheese" went quite beyond the bounds. It was in the Dog Days too; and as one masterpiece after another of that robust *cuisine* came upon the board—steak, potatoes in their jackets, tankards of stout in which you might almost have stood a knife upright, with hissing hot toasted cheddar to follow, he waived them with a squeaking "What is this?" which carried dismay to us all. It was horrid, but I am ashamed to say it was still sport of a kind. Its culmination came when the host, fresh from his guide-book, explained

that this was the favourite fare of Dr. Johnson. "Dr. Johnson—who was he?" was the merciless parting shot.

In his day, and to the last in his own way, he was one of the handsomest men I have ever seen. There was so much distinction in the face; and, when its time came, the snow-cap of grey hair was an added charm for the lofty brow. He was of a most melancholy cast in his innermost recesses of being; and his boundless activities were but resolute attempts to make the best of a bad job—existence. He was no tuft-hunter, yet I think he sometimes suffered lords beyond the requirements of the case. His translations are among his masterpieces. What must he have thought of our modern Samuel Butler's *Homer* with its deliberate jog-trot of colloquialisms for the talk of the skies! or of Mr. Masefield's *Pompey the Great* as the dignity of history in drama? He was of the few who broke a victorious lance with Anatole France. He would not have his Joan of Arc explained away on theories of hallucination, or of suggestion by priestly fraud.

Such was the team in the old days. Many changes were to come in the course of transition to the new ha'penny model of our time. This has been marked in a way by the passing of the editor of the old type. The new one is no longer, of necessity at least, a scholarly recluse, he is a man of the world. His three leaders are reduced to one and a few scrappy paragraphs. His sub-editor has in a manner supplanted him by learning

to let the facts in their dressing speak for themselves. This artificer forms opinion by suggestion and enables his reader to say 'I told you so' without knowing that he has himself been told. His room, which used to be one of the smallest in the office, is now comparable in size and the number and multitudinous activities of the staff, to the kitchen of a big hotel. Add to this that the departments have been increased beyond the dreams of the past. There is a huge contingent for illustration, staffed with all the labour, artistic and mechanical, belonging to that branch of the work—draughtsmen for the sketches, craftsmen for the production of the plates. So, while this is still the newest thing in one way, in another, as picture writing, it is a reversion to the youth of the world. All the old work had to be done by the pen: Senior's descriptions were literature.

The library again is an integral part of the equipment. In the earlier time the leader writer had to carry all his information in his own head. Paul could do it, but then his was the head of Paul. The books of reference might almost be counted on the fingers. Wilson, so long the mainstay of *The Times*, told me that the only thing of the kind in his room at the office was an *Army List*, and that several years out of date. In these days, whatever the topic, you have only to touch a bell, and you are instantly furnished with all the information bearing on your subject from a miniature British Museum on the premises. And there is this to the good, it is information brought down to the very day of writing. The librarian,

often a young woman, is an Atlas staggering under the burden of a world of reference, and understood to be ready to resign or to commit suicide at a moment's notice, on failure to meet all demands at sight.

I did my best in my own behoof with a small amateurish collection of my own. When E. T. Cook came into the succession of the editorship, he continued the same plan from his own previous practice, and we exchanged good offices at need. He was a man of the new generation, and a remarkable one. Given his proper supply of cigarettes, I think he would have been capable of writing the whole leader page on an emergency. I often saw him in a tight place: I never saw him turn a hair. At Oxford, I believe, he was one of the best Aristotelians of the time: so the drilling and the milling of the academical system counts, when the student is of the right sort.

Newspaper work is a terrible strain till one gets used to it. The ordinary conditions of literary leisure, pleasant surroundings, the sense of the full possession of your own soul, are opposed to it in every particular. Fleet Street is never perfectly quiet day or night. Often you back on a slum, and have to take a courteous interest in its brawls. Slum or not, the rooms are usually bare and comfortless, and the sounds and other interruptions incidental to the work of the premises are distracting until you have acquired the second nature of the calling. The too insistent 'devil' who steals into your room every ten minutes or so to bring proofs of the whole issue for your inspection as

they are pulled, and to take copy sheet by sheet as you write, is a bit of a trial till you get used to him. The 'reader' who occasionally descends from above to ask you to verify a quotation, or to suggest an emendation, is another. Mine was more welcome, for he rarely took his departure without offering a pinch of snuff. The type is usually a venerable person with a manner suggestive of better days and higher hopes in the work of the pen; his out-of-the-way erudition is sometimes quite remarkable. There are moments when you could fain ask him to linger and tell you of his past; but after all he is still one interruption more. For another, there is the distant but still quite audible throb of the engines, as a preliminary to the work of going to press.

Writing is almost impossible till you have got the better of these trials, and you will never attain to the mastery if you begin late, or let yourself drop out of training. Poor Davidson, a man of letters if ever there was one, went all to pieces as a journalist under a mishap of the latter kind. He once came to the office as a *locum tenens* in holiday time, and with distressing results. The place was new to him, the conditions were distracting, he was unable to write a line. The demon boy came and went, and still all that awaited him was the sight of a miserable fellow creature with his hands in his hair, and a welter of torn beginnings on the floor.

Presently, of course on information received, the editor dropped in with a cheery 'how are you going on?'

Not very well.

Ah, just the want of the habit of it, but you'll soon get used——

If you don't mind, I think I won't stay.

"They're of no mortal use to you," he said, as he decamped, with a handful of his failures in his pocket, "but they might come in handy for a novel on the Press."

The whole staff is now mobilized for instant action at any point of the compass. Speed is the first requisite, and with speed, strangely enough, has come more leisure than of old. We toiled through our task into the small hours, often enough with midnight for our starting-point. Nowadays they must be almost ready to go to press at that hour, so as to have the paper served with the hot rolls, in most parts of the kingdom. Mere fast trains have long been superseded, though they still play their part. Much of it is wired down to branch centres in the chief towns, every important word winged for its flight to the farthest confines of the system as it falls from the pen. We old stagers had the sense of holiday, if we managed to get away before two in the morning, when we staggered forth to our cabs at the door, to take a first instalment of sleep on the way home. As often as not, our cabman slept too, trusting to Providence and his own latent powers for emergencies.

Each of us had his own particular man for the drive. I once took the liberty of remonstrating with mine on the risks of collision with the market carts taking the opposite course to ours, their

drivers wholly regardless of rules of the road as they lurched in slumber on their shafts.

"It's like this," he said. "'Ow many years 'ave I drove you, and 'ave I ever spilt you onst?"

I had to leave it there until "onst"—I lived in Kensington then—the hansom came into collision with the refuge at the top of St. James's Street, and turned neatly over on its side. We were rescued by one of the night birds always at hand in London. "I see it comin'," he said—"but I was a bit too late; you was on the hobelisk"—his generic name for anything placed by authority in the middle of the road—"before I could give your chap the tip." To this day, I believe, an obelisk in honour of a deceased alderman is still used as a refuge in Farringdon Street.

"What do you think of yourself now?" I asked the cabman.

"'Ow many years 'ave I drove—— Well, it won't 'appen again."

And, with my active co-operation, it never did.

Strangely enough, though the glass was shivered to fragments, neither of us was a penny the worse. Even Providence had been caught napping, but had roused itself in time to make amends.

His successor was always in the highest spirits, and whistled all the way home. I never saw a more cheerful man. As he told me in confidence, he was getting on. I was only one of his regular customers: "Mr. Phil May—the gentleman what does the pictures for the papers"—was another; and often gave him a sovereign for his fare as he

made the tour of the night clubs. "He starts just as you leave off: you know—'Box and Cox': you've seen that I dessay. I'm beginning to save, I am; and by and by I'll buy a cab and a gee-gee or two, and be my own master." He achieved them bit by bit and whistled louder than ever. Then one day, while acting as his own stableman, he had his leg badly broken by a kick from one of his horses, and got lamed for life. The long illness brought him down with a run; he was sold up, and he had to decline to a "growler" owing to the impossibility of mounting the higher box—the growler and wage servitude. After that he whistled no more.

All so well and truly tried, and all so frustrated. The mystery of the luck!

Sir John Robinson was the master of us all in Bouverie Street. He was at first only the manager, though he afterwards became titular editor. As between him and the nominal chief it was long a question of conflict of jurisdictions, like that between the Mikado and the Shogun. He ruled by suggestion, scouring the news of the day for topics for Lang, and promoting without commanding suitable subjects for the rest. His pride was that he knew a handy man when he saw one, and annexed him as soon as he could. He discovered Archibald Forbes, when the latter, while languishing for a job equal to his powers, was glad to become correspondent for *The Morning Advertiser* at the outbreak of the Franco-German war. Our manager was still busy with the question of getting him into the net, when one day up came his card for an

interview. "The Lord hath delivered him into my hand," muttered Robinson, and he was engaged at once. The result was the finest work in that branch of journalism ever seen since the golden prime of Russell of *The Times*.

Forbes was an ex-dragoon, in one of his attributes as a rolling stone, and he never lost that trace of his origin. His manners were those of the barrack-room, but genius atoned for all. He knew how to get there, the supreme gift of a writer working in the rough-and-tumble of war. He wrote, as they all have to do, sitting, standing, or lying down, with a drum-head for a table, or at need the saddle of his horse. And when he had written he knew how to get first in with his copy. His rivals in the field might be as quick as himself with the pen, but they had no other resource than to wait for the transmission of their despatches until the military people had done with the wires. Forbes saw a better way; Luxemburg was on the frontier of the scene of fighting, and its wires were disengaged. He made straight for that quarter after every battle, often riding all night to do it, and beat the field. In work of this kind, an hour sometimes counts in priority, and four-and-twenty, or even twelve, make an eternity. He was ably seconded at the office. Robinson slept there half the time, to await the despatch, and at need to bring it out at once. The result was fame for the writer, a circulation of leaps and bounds for the paper—sorely in need of it—and a modest fortune for the arch-contriver in the managerial chair.

He was content to be a contriver, an efficient cause to the last, without a thought of the honours of notoriety. He knew, and that was enough for him. His eyes twinkling behind his spectacles, he sat tight in his office chair, and judged men and events. His one infirmity was that he never could tell where he had left the spectacles, after removing them but a moment before. A smart lad in his antechamber found a vocation that was something of a sinecure in restoring them to their owner. His heart was as good as his head, a true friend, a genial companion, a lover of the good story and the quip and crank for his leisure hour. If he had any other weakness it was the belief that a diary, which he had kept for the better part of his career, was charged with secrets of state unpublishable in his lifetime, and only to be printed with caution after his death. He seemed to tremble at the thought of the dangerous nature of its revelations. It made its appearance in due course, but without disturbing the peace of politicians or even contributing to the gaiety of nations in any marked way. This is easily accounted for. The secrets of to-day are the only things that count as curiosity and wonder; to-morrow they have only the interest of ancient history. Fresh from a cabinet minister's room, Robinson might justly fear that he carried high explosives enough to ruin a government, if they happened to catch. As it was, their too long storage in the magazine of his diary often failed to bring them to the flash-point of the interest of anecdote.

He was the first to use the wires extensively—with an anathema on the consequences. For long years they were regarded by the Press as a costly luxury, and no wonder when every message was charged at prohibitory rates. Reuter partly remedied this in introducing a system of joint service for matters of common interest. He saw that, in many things, what would serve for one paper might serve as well for a hundred, with a consequent cheapening to the customers.

Robinson had a good story of the way in which the enterprise was launched in this country. Reuter went to *The Daily News* as to the other leading papers, with an offer of copious and trustworthy telegrams from abroad on this plan.

The manager naturally asked for terms.

"Nothing," said Reuter, genially, and I believe sounding it with a "d."

"Come! come! that will never do—what do you expect to get out of it?"

"The esteem of the British people, whom I admire."

"Humph! you may send 'em in."

They came, they were worth printing, and they duly appeared on those extraordinary terms in every important journal. At the end of the year they had become indispensable, and then the philanthropist called again.

You like my little telegrams?

Undoubtedly.

Well, I want to arrange about going on with them.

Very pleased, I am sure.

My terms are a thousand a year.

Whew! that's a very different story from the one you——

"Ah!" said the other quietly, "we are talking business now."

And he got his thousand all round. To refuse would have been to have given priority to a host of rivals.

No wonder the capitalist has learned to think himself indispensable to the Press, when every new departure involves expenditure at this rate. When I see how the newspaper is staffed, from the commissioner at the door to the editor in his shrine, I think with awe of the bewildering fraction of the incoming ha'penny, even with the grant in aid, of the advertisements, for the average share. The hundreds who want their mite! The huge sub-editorial staff; the clouds of skirmishing reporters and interviewers; the illustrators, caricaturists, cartographers, and printers; the resident correspondents abroad in their costly offices, to say nothing of the specials at the front with their mounts and their motor-cars. With that all the agency of distribution, from Smith and Son down to the urchin who calls his wares in the street, and the goody at the chandler's shop who works them in with the bacon and the brandy balls. The head spins with it, as under some new illustration of the problem of the indivisibility of matter. Is there no chance for the mere human being with the sense of a message, and nothing in his pocket?

In such difficulties one takes to day-dreaming

as the only resource. I have done that in one of my books where I imagine a man with little more in the way of worldly gear than what he stands upright in, yet determined to try his luck as a founder. He fastens on a neighbourhood of mean streets, and resolves to tell the truth about it for good and ill—his premises a back garret; his plant a cheap duplicating machine for manuscript. Nothing of public moment in that neighbourhood escapes him, in its crimes, vices, labours, privations, heroisms—the home, the gin-shop, the charitable agencies, too often with their spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes from the underlings at their gates, the district visitors, the parson on the prowl for souls. Well, he makes that microcosm hum; and presently his single sheet at a ha'penny —or at the price of a farthing epic, if you like— becomes a second necessary of life to many of its inmates, and to an ever-widening circle of the great world outside, to whom he sends it free for a time on probation. It is a dead loss at first, but what with his dietary of oatmeal and potatoes, and his soul never failing in its purpose, it slowly begins to pay out-of-pocket expenses. The next stage is a fount of broken type, and a handpress. By and by, still with all the serious labours of production and distribution manipulated on the system of a one-man show, he feels justified in adding an urchin to the staff. The daring of it, the individuality, is the charm; it is at least a voice in our wilderness and no echo. After a while the big brothers, the leviathans of the ordinary issues, get wind of it and write it up

as a jest, if only in the hope of writing it down. The sociologist looks in to inquire; the circulation widens, the front garret is added to the back, and so until a gas engine rises to the occasion, and finally with the help of a whole battery of Hoes, all bought out of profits, we attain to a largest circulation, on the pure merits of our leading contributor, Truthful James, with never a trick of the trade to help us out. Our office lamp has become the brightest thing on the orb, and is distinctly recognizable from the Milky Way.

The rich investor may look in if he likes, but only with his ha'penny for his copy, and, by preference, his hat in his hand. All his millions will never buy an interest in it, in the sense of a directing voice. The idea is that there may be as good a chance as ever for the small man, if he knows how to set to work. The older and the better way was to end with capital, not to begin with it; it is a mere hot-water bottle at the best.

My dream is out. To make no secret of it, I came to London to *do* something like this, but I wasn't man enough for the job. The poor compromise of *John Street* was all that remained.

## CHAPTER XX

### CLUBS

MEN'S clubs are the milestones of their life course, but it is as well to wait to the last before you judge the career. The old-fashioned way was to begin with the Bohemian, go on to the Respectable, and thence, if it could be managed, to the Ineffable of Pall Mall.

I knew The Savage in its mellowest, and to my mind, most delightful hour when it was in the large room under the Piazza at Covent Garden. Its second stage was the Savoy. In its third and present at Adelphi Terrace, I was not a member, but only an occasional guest.

The Whitefriars, never more than a dining club, was my middle course. It had its day in Bohemia, but reorganized as it is now, it is something of a debating society tempered by a dinner. There is a subject for discussion, and a "celebrity," usually from the outside, as the opener. Its only blemish in the nature of the case is that it is sometimes a little too improving for the mind, to the exclusion of all chance of exchanging a word with one's neighbour. Every human being is a speech-maker, under suitable conditions—the platform, the chimney corner, the tea-table, or the smoking-room. Few, however, are able to respond with perfect

self-possession to the call of "legs." The Club of Boswell's mighty theme must still be our best model for all time. It was an age of conversation, and the subject settled itself by natural selection. Think of Johnson or Burke brought to his feet by a tap from a sturdy hammerman in the chair, and limited to five minutes for his course. The proceedings moved at their own sweet will, and their no order, which was order in the highest, carried with it the possibility of both the grave and the gay. When the heavy lead threatened to be too ponderous, there was always Goldsmith at hand with his quip, or story, addled in the hatching, like his masterpiece in the riddle of the peas and Turnham Green. On rare occasions we have been blessed in this way at the 'Friars. I hope I shall never forget the evening when Max O'Rell was in the chair, and Rapson, the great Orientalist, then at the British Museum, now an Oxford professor, was the guest of the evening. At the Museum he belonged to the department of Coins and Medals; and O'Rell wanted to say something nice about him as a numismatist. With his imperfect knowledge of the niceties of our tongue, he could manage it only in this way: "Gentlemen, we are honoured to-night with the presence of a well-known coiner——" The rest was lost in an inevitable roar, with Rapson as the loudest contributor. O'Rell tried to join in the merriment, but he was too late; it had evidently caught him unawares.

These difficulties have lately suggested to some few lovers of the older model a Fireside Club; limited in numbers to a round dozen, and without

a programme of any sort. We have good talk—mainly about our common shop of the arts, in their setting of the incidents of the time. For perfection in this line you must have the round table: anything with corners favours button-holing and particularism. We are working up to that piece of furniture, but it is no easy thing to find in sufficient size. We were after the very last in Wardour Street, when it was snapped up by a gang of politicians. You could have played cricket on it. It was a beauty, and it bore a mark which, the vendor assured us, was that of the cabinet-maker to the Royal Family at Camelot. We had our revenge; they never met but to disagree: such tables are not for the likes o' them.

A thing not to be forgotten is that the clubs change with the times. The Savage is not what it was, for one reason no doubt because it is something better. One venerable survivor of the membership of my day is now a model of all the proprieties, and, for aught I know to the contrary, sings canticles. At the Garrick, the stock-broker is no longer a pariah.

The Reform Club, when I joined, was in its old age. It had outlived the almost revolutionary impulses of its origin, and had cooled far more rapidly than the globe. Its typical member was very well satisfied with reforms as they stood, on the conviction that there had been change enough to last as long as the eyesight of healthy vision. Its still more typical group sat for luncheon at a small table that just held five for comfort, Robinson, James Payn and Black the novelists, "Joe"

Parkinson, and Wemyss Reid. If there happened to be a vacant place, and it was rashly appropriated by an unwary freshman, the head waiter looked troubled, while the others sent the intruder, or, at need, themselves, to Coventry forthwith. I once made this deplorable mistake, and never felt more uncomfortable in my life. They had all voted for me, and were extremely cordial in individual encounter, but they seemed to feel that the great Reform Bill itself drew the line at social conventions. It was all right with them, and I am sure they most sincerely hoped it was so with everybody else. After luncheon they either ministered to Payn's almost guilty passion for a rubber, or took —still reserved—seats round the fire in the smoking-room. The programme was as fixed and invariable as the rest. Payn cut biting jests at Robinson's expense, while his victim, who idolized him for his humour, winced, yet still chuckled with the thought of his fine form. Black told the latest story : " Bang gaed a saxpence," I believe, made its first appearance in London at this institution. So did :

> Ten little niggers drinking sherry wine,
> One tasted So-and-So's and then there were nine.

Parkinson stood for the humour of the man about town. His was a curious history. He began as a civil servant of the old days of leisure, and doubled the part as one of Charles Dickens's young men, writing many a paper for *Household Words*. This served to launch him in journalism, and he joined the staff of *The Daily News* as a descriptive writer. In the course of his duties it fell to his lot

to describe the laying of an Atlantic cable. The chief contractor was on the cable-ship, with his charming daughter; and Joe, as one of the finest young fellows of the day, made such good use of his time that, at the end of the voyage the young people threw themselves at the feet of the astonished sire, to ask his blessing on their engagement. They were met by a flat refusal. The parent had risen from the ranks by mother wit and character. His daughter's distress touched him with the second thoughts that are best, among them the consideration that Joe might be a catch in his way. After all he was an educated man of winning manners, and his accomplishments would be useful on the Board of Directors. The match was made, very much to the advantage of both sides. Joe rose to his opportunities, became a capitalist, and had a son in the Guards. If there is any way of going beyond that in aspiration, I should like to hear of it.

He was a great authority on eating and drinking; and he and his bosom friend Edmund Yates rendered each other a strange kind of mutual service in studies of that sort. They were mighty diners-out, but they knew the risk, especially at public dinners. Who was to answer for the wines? It was therefore agreed between them that each should alternately make the first experiment, so that if anything went amiss, there might be one survivor. The taster of the hour sipped, while his friend waited and watched; and according to his nod or shake of the head, the other fell to or abstained.

Yates was not of the club, but Parkinson often served that institution, in much the same way. He excogitated new dishes, and tried them with the help of a chosen band. Once, when there happened to be much talk of the simple life, they attempted a dinner from a bill of fare of our forefathers preserved in that curious book Walker's *Original*. It consisted I believe of a little fish, a little roast, with a remove of game, a tart and a kickshaw. They saw their great man in the kitchen about it: and entering heartily into the project he did his best. But when they had finished, all had to join in sorrowful confession that they had not dined. The Reform survives in the reputation of its cookery; and in other respects it may easily boast of going one more on the Carlton next door.

In striking contrast to these there was occasionally the august figure of John Bright, less in its effect and actual presence than a memory of an earlier and a greater time. After his split with the Liberal Party on the question of Home Rule, he seemed to sit in a proud isolation of his own choosing, for there were plenty to bear him company. His appearance seemed to call the smoking-room to order, and he often came and went without other companionship than his paper and his cigar.

"Labby" was another member of note, though towards the latter end of his career his favourite resort was rather that club of all clubs, under the clock tower at Westminster. Here, especially when he was playing the part of Achilles in his tent, after the tiff with Mr Gladstone, he was the life

and soul of the place. His cynical humour found vent in teaching the young Tories, who adored him, how to put spokes in the wheel of the Liberal machine. "What are you fellows about? Why don't you ask a question about—so and so—and floor the lot?" When he heard a good story against the Government he would croak gleefully: "I must go and tell that to my cobblers at Northampton"—who adored him to the end.

The National Liberal was my next stage, in political clubs. Of this, again, one may say "it moves," as a register of the heart-beats of Radical England.

The most interesting clubs of another kind are those like the Omar Khayyám, of which you hear very little beyond the walls. It dines once a quarter or so, pays homage, rubrical and poetic, to the Master, and then makes haste to forget him in talk about things in general, flavoured by a sort of ritualistic humour generally turning on the misdeeds of the committee or of particular members. This imports a butt, and that office is filled by a genial victim now almost the titular holder. Many men, well known in science, the arts, the higher Civil Service and what not, meet here to unbend. The proceedings are brought into keeping with the philosophy of the Eastern teacher by a tone of genial pessimism that runs all through. Whence and Whither? Who knows? But since you are here, you can't do better than make the best of it. "A cup of wine," at least, to cheer us; if not "Thou!"

A curious club that is still not a club is to be

found in a sort of movable feast, held once a year, by a loving disciple of the author of *Erewhon*. It convenes only just as the spirit moves the disciple to call writers and others together to talk on Butler and his work. It has some affinity with those Chinese committees whose business it is to promote deserving persons to a post among the constellations. The idea is that Butler was a great forerunner and pathfinder in the realism of modern literature, and that if you sweep the poet's corner of the skies assiduously, you will find him seated there in his immortality of glory. I have heard very good speaking at this board.

The English clubs, as a rule, differ from the French in one important point. Ours tends to give you only the raw material of association—a place to meet in—and to eat in, leaving the rest to take care of itself. The French club generally feels bound to provide also the means of amusement. I take as a type the *Union Artistique*—the *Mirlitons* for short—most French clubs have a nickname. It is for artists and men of letters, but that is only the beginning of it. What are you going to do with them and for them when they are on your hands? Hence endless devices and an overworked committee—plays in a properly appointed bijou theatre, written, staged and acted by members, except for the contingent of leading actresses from the outside; exhibitions of pictures painted by members, concerts staffed by members, lectures, dances, and so on. The fogey has to be pretty smart sometimes to get his chance of a nap.

In my day you found the British model at the old *Union*, where they had played whist daily since the time of Talleyrand. Their cold shoulder—not of mutton but of manners—might almost have put the Athenæum to shame.

The two national styles in club fellowship are just as sharply contrasted in eating and drinking. How feebly does an ordinary British club rise to its opportunities with the potato. We know the infinite variety of the French genius, in its application to the treatment of this vegetable. As for green things, who but an Englishman could have achieved the almost savage simplicity of boiled cabbage in slabs?—perhaps the true reading for Nebuchadnezzar's grass of the field, though assuredly importing no mitigation of his punishment. I once saw this delicacy offered to a Frenchman at an English table. His *merci-non* was the most decisive utterance I ever heard in my life. Our clubs for ladies are leading the way with a daintier fare, within the limit of their means.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SALONS

THE mid-Victorian drawing-room is becoming a *salon* and it will be all the better for the change. People may now meet to talk about the things that are really in their minds. I could name a dozen places of this sort, but it would be a misuse of the limelight of publicity. The hostess keeps up with the intellectual movements of the day, and her pace in this proceeding never betrays the uniform of the blue stocking. People drop in by contrivance of a kind, but it is understood that they meet for no chronicle of small beer. There is even a subject—so much of purpose enters into it —though pains are taken to keep the note of easy conversation. We have still higher things to rise to by letting the subject determine itself by natural selection, as in the French model. The first condition is an instinctive sympathy with the things that count. This, in spontaneous utterance, prompted if you like by the mere news of the day, will do the rest. Julie de Lespinasse, we may be sure, and Madame du Deffand had no syllabus; Hume or Alembert dropped in, and the rest occurred. The old coffee-houses of our Augustan age were our nearest approach to it, but they were

limited to the men: there can be no true concert without the woman's note. It is certain that Addison, for one, wanted to introduce it; he says so almost in terms.

The best I know in this kind, and here I must, if only by way of exception, depart from my rule of naming no names, has long been the *salon* of the Meynells. It is a whole family of letters. The father, while the surest judge of ways and means in that art in all London, sometimes in his passion for brevity does less than full justice to his subject and his own powers. The mother belongs to the public, in spite of herself, by virtue of her work, and of a native distinction which has made her a representative woman. She has written but too little, for all of it bears the stamp of a highly cultured mind, and of the cosmopolitanism of wide sympathies. Her youth, and that of her brilliant sister, the painter of *The Roll Call*, was spent in Italy; and her knowledge of Italian literature and Italian life makes her as much at home in Rome as in London, or for that matter in Boston of the Americans.

She was the muse of Coventry Patmore in his old age, in that stage of his life a poet pretty hard to please with other people's work. To be fair to him he could at times be as hard on his own. "My only poem that reached the great heart of the people," he laughed one day, "was published in a comic paper (*Judy* I think) at the time of the Franco-Prussian war of the 'seventies. The King of Prussia was sending such pious telegrams to his wife on the slaughter of the French battlefields that it was

impossible to refrain." And he solemnly declaimed, as memory serves, in these terms :

> Oh, just to say, my dear Augusta,
> We've had another awful buster,
> Ten thousand Frenchmen sent below :
> Praise God from whom all blessings flow !

Everybody knew the jingle : till then, I, for one, never knew him for the author.

That fastidious contact, I have often thought, was rather unfortunate for Mrs. Meynell. It accounted for a certain touch of preciosity in her occasional judgments which led to the exclusion of Grey's *Elegy* from her anthology of English verse—on the ground, I think, of its ' obviousness.' Yet what has made it obvious but the universality of appeal, which has also made it the common possession of our race ? For the same reason *The Lord's Prayer* labours under exactly the same disadvantage. The *Elegy* is the true psalm of life of the heroic soul ; cast in a classic mould because it imports the attitude of that soul towards the human lot, in its measured and restrained melancholy, its fine sense of the tears of things.

It was, I believe, the great Smelfungus of our time, who found Jaques on the seven ages of man, and Hamlet in the soliloquy a trifle commonplace, and was good enough to suggest improvements on the lines of a Fabian tract.

The Meynells brought out the poet Francis Thomson, not as a show, but as a friend of the family, who was to be met there because he was long in the family care. They found him by pure accident in the lowest depths of the London

Bohemia, tended him, gave him the sense of what was due to himself. The story is well known. He was earning his night's lodging as a cab-tout at the doors of a theatre, but something told them that here was a genius who only wanted mothering and mending to take his place in the firmament. A copy of Homer in the original, peeping from a pocket,—both dog's eared—first gave them pause. This led to his identification as the author of a poem printed in a magazine under their editorship, with no particular clue to the circumstances of the author. His connection with them was, at the beginning, so much a family matter that for some time he was content with one theme, his hostess and her children. When he wanted to write about angels, he had nothing to do but single out 'Prue' and 'Dimpling,' and fit them with wings—always most felicitously to measure. When his erratic ways threatened to make him a little unmanageable they sent him to a monastery for safe keeping. I have seen him, in custody of one of the fathers in frock and cord, brought back to town for a few days' probation, and frolicking it in glorious talk on their hearth-rug. He passes to immortality, but Chesterton is still there to take his place with talk even finer than his writing, and others of mark to make a House for him, if one cared to name them. This is the *salon* in its perfection, the symposium with the nectar of high thought for its circling draughts.

Not that other beverage is entirely neglected. You sup there, if you get the chance, but in the homely way of the cold joint in cut, the salad, and

the sweet which just serve, like the banquets in the *Iliad*, to put away from you the desire of eating and drinking, as a hindrance to the flow of soul. The daughters, married or single, are the Hebes of the occasion, aided at will by the guests themselves. To show that you love your opposite neighbour as yourself, you have but to pass a dish to him across the long narrow table, which recalls the Millais picture of the feast in *The Pot of Basil* that tells no small part of the story.

In all things they live their lives exactly in their own way, and that I suppose is the only royal road to originality. One of the boys who has a taste for 'curios' has established himself in what he calls a Serendipity Shop, on the suggestion of Horace Walpole's precious coinage of a word for the people who are constantly finding valuable articles by chance. Another is at Oxford and doing well. Olive is for art. Their modest "place" in Sussex for occasional retreat from the worries of town is a family settlement. They have bought a bit of land at a proper distance from the railway station, and dotted it with cottages for parents and children. As the latter reach maturity and housekeeping on their own account, a new homestead is added to the compound, far enough for privacy and perfect freedom, near enough to link itself with the parental foundation at the heart of it by the smoke from its roof. They dine in common, or the other way, just as the fancy takes them. The infants are the principal go-betweens, scampering to and fro to keep the company well posted in its domestic news by a wireless of their

own. It is the life of the clan in a new setting suited to our time.

Here 'Prue,' for intimacy, Viola for the Registrar-General, now writes her books. They are so full of the country and of fine observation of all its phases and its moods that I can but suspect as much. It is a new departure in the literature of fiction. They are wholly unlike anything else, but that is nothing: so are many poor books. These make a category for themselves.

The charm, I think, comes of a simplicity, anxious to make a meaning clear, and therefore more or less innocent of conscious art in the way of putting it, or guilty of it only in the sense of its own shortcomings. It is the shrewd saying with no thought of the epigram. With this an equally extreme simplicity in the theme. A man or two, a maid or two, in a medium of uneventful events—a word spoken, as often as not, unspoken, a commonplace of greeting with its intonation in the wrong place. A walk, a drive, a shower—anything will do, even tea, yet with this, perhaps, before you know anything about it, a storm of the first magnitude at the bottom of the cup. Taken altogether, an anatomy of the nerve system of the woman soul, and this not in its eccentricities but in its law. The plot, such as it is from the ordinary novel reader's point of view, moves on lines of emotion, not on lines of action; the characters are anything that God has made, and the writer happens to have met. One hero was a mere diver by trade, but when his time had come, and quite in the way of business, he made a plunge that carried with it

all the tragedy of a dip into the Maelstrom. One heroine, a servant wench, is yet of the household of Lear. Another, lady-help to a man of letters, while never missing a post or failing to verify a quotation, nurses a soul of fire. All the drawing in it is like the drawing of the new art, done, not with the pencil in lines, but with the brush in colours. Genius in a word, and as its only begetter little Prue, who but the other day might have been tossed in a railway rug, for want of a blanket, by the author of *The Hound of Heaven*. What are you to say about it—heredity, environment, eugenical evolution—fiddle-de-dee! Say nothing, but take it as you find it and ask for more.

One sometimes gets a bit cross with her, for all that, *Columbine*, the latest as yet, quite fine down to the last page but one—then, if you please, a fresh start in misunderstandings, a fresh shuffle and cut for the choice of affinities, and the whole business started all over again, and not even written for the distracted reader, but left to him to work out in nightmares. The mind reels under 'their will and their won't' till they begin to suggest nothing more edifying than another breed from Mars. Human souls ought not to be handled in such a way as to suggest arguments against the abuses of vivisection. Can it be a new terror of the obvious in her mother's child?

## CHAPTER XXII

### FAITHS AND UNFAITHS

NOTHING is barred now in mere discussion. There is quite a run on the faiths that tend to make religion rather a philosophy than an ethic, and to give conduct its only imperative in the social proprieties.

The newspapers take up religion as a feature; the public is circularised in its thousands, with posers on the problems—the solutions, to be published, with or without your portrait, but with your autograph to oblige, for the facsimile. Mrs. Besant, caught on the wing to or from India, gives us a kind of paraphrase on 'all for the best in the best of all possible worlds,' as a new setting of the Theosophic confession of faith. Mr. Maskelyne, labelled as 'doyen of conjurers,' gets in a dig at that confession. It will be woe to evildoers in the next world, he thinks, especially "for those, who for the sake of gain, concoct new religions, and set up false Christs and mythical Mahatmas to impose upon and rob the unwary." It might have been differently put, particularly in its suggested application to individuals; in such matters there need be no question of integrity and good intent.

Mrs. Besant was and is still a typical figure of

the time, in her power to hold the most contradictory faiths for fair trial. I have known her, or known of her, in almost every phase. She was a clergyman's wife, never perhaps a very orthodox one, though she seems to have done her best. At this stage, she used to steal into her husband's church, when she knew she would have it all to herself—that is to say on week-days—and mount the pulpit to try her powers in saying something on her own account to the attentive echoes. In the next stage, with a due interval, of course, she has become a disciple of Mr. Bradlaugh, our East End Voltaire or Tom Paine with a difference to intensify the spirit of denial, who denounced the religion of the churches as a mockery. Her heretical self-assertion was a great blow to her brother-in-law, Walter Besant, who actually altered the accentuation of the family name, by way of showing that she had no longer part or lot in its fortunes. Her children have been devoted to her from first to last.

Bradlaugh was still a priest in his way, and in his new cult of Reason inducted neophytes with a ceremonial, and buried them when they happened to want it. One of the many Holyoakes was with him, and kept shop as publisher of the literature of the movement, in a house in the network of courts between Fleet Street and Holborn. The full ritual was used at his funeral. The mourners were told how consonant it was to his feelings in life to await his sure and certain resurrection as cereals for the nourishment of his fellow-creatures, or as flowers for their delight.

Bradlaugh's eloquence of strong logical exposition was extraordinary, and so was his debating power with its flashes of humour and of scorn. There are to this day abiding traces of his influence in the perfectly ordered sequence of Mrs. Besant's themes, and the studied clearness of her delivery. The silvery voice is all her own, if indeed she is not as much indebted to nature as to art for the rest. She held her rude audiences at the Hall of Science, as she has since held others of every degree, by the sheer magic of her oratorical powers. I have a vivid recollection of her at a somewhat later period, arrayed in all her striking beauty, in a crimson gown, and delivering, with a sort of measured fury, a commemorative address on the *Commune* of Paris. It was a fine performance; she might have stood for a statue of the goddess of war in the personality of an inspired *pétroleuse*. She was a republican, an unbeliever, a holder of the most extraordinary doctrines on the relations of the sexes, a duplicate one might say, in regard to all authority, of old Blanqui with his "neither God nor master."

A change and an interval of years, and I am with the Theosophists in the Avenue Road, to find her as the mild and submissive catechumen of that profession of faith. She has met Madame Blavatsky, and has found religion in an importation from the East. She sits, metaphorically, at the feet of the old arch-priestess with the staring eyes like bits of glittering enamel, the mannish voice, the unwieldy bulk, the habits of the valetudinarian. The cooing as of the turtle, that belongs more

properly to the environment of the doctrine of universal love, is done by the new disciple, the former pythoness of the revolutionary platform. Her eyes are suffused with a soft glow of trust in her teacher that by no means stops short of faith in what we should ignorantly call her miracles.

The surroundings being propitious, the teacher may, if the humour takes her, give the visitors a touch of her craftmanship there and then. Someone, let us say, has expressed a wish for a gold ring. Nothing easier; a wave of the hand in the air, and, perhaps, a few muttered words of incantation, and the ring is produced from space, and handed to the visitor. But the first condition of its production, as all are carefully informed, is to hold it no miracle at all. It is simply a result of a deeper knowledge of the properties of matter, as these have been discovered in the course of countless ages by the Mahatmas, or wise men of the East, and communicated to the lady in the chair. I was not fortunate enough to witness this demonstration; I did but hear of it as an unquestionable fact.

In India, as we all know by the proceedings of the Psychical Research Society, the same magician of science has produced from the earth under her feet, a whole tea service, tongs and all, for the refreshment of herself and the disciples. They thirsted, and there was nothing at hand. They were told to dig under a neighbouring tree, and, lo! all things needful, as neatly packed as any basket at the railway stations. It is true that an angry servant of the household afterwards

confessed to placing it there by authority the night before, and to connivance in the arrangements by which the party was led to the exact spot to find it on call.

These quarrels did not shake the faith of believers, and if you were not a believer, you might go elsewhere. But first join the classes for instruction, and give yourself a chance. The Mahatmas in their lonely retreats in the Himalayas think nothing of such trivial manifestations of power. Much more could they do, much more could they impart, but for the fear of the misuse of it by the ignorance or the malevolence of unregenerate man. They could turn out not only rings but earthquakes with a wave of the hand. But never fear; they will keep us all safe until they have the full and perfect assurance that their secrets will be used to no purpose but the common good of the race.

Presently, if we are highly favoured, we may be asked to move to the dining-room for a frugal meal that involves no violence to animal life in any of its forms. On the way there you must not so much as put a foot on a blackbeetle if it crosses your path. We are all little brothers and sisters of St. Francis in that respect. The teachers unbend. One shows in quite a matter-of-fact way that he is often in conversational touch with the Hebrew patriarchs or the Hindoo sages. Nobody exhibits the slightest astonishment; it is simply a piece of society news from that higher astral plane which these personages have long since attained. Mrs. Besant, perhaps, makes passing

mention of a call that very morning from Bradlaugh (long since dead), and of his cheery salutation: "You were right—there *is* a life beyond the grave." They had parted company on her conversion, but they never ceased to be good friends. Dinner over, we move to the library to circularise the universe on the business of propaganda, through the medium of the halfpenny post.

Another change, and we are in the lecture room to listen to an amazing discourse by the same lady, on the progress of a primordial germ of soul in the making, through the starry spheres. It is a tedious business—I mean the journey—running through thousands and even millions of years in time and billions of miles in space. The itinerary is as explicit and as matter of fact as a jotting for a drive through the dukeries in a motor-car. The germ abides for so many æons—say in Orion: I do not speak by the card, but only for the purpose of illustration; any name will do, and any period, if only it is big enough. Other calls on Jupiter, Uranus or Saturn, may run collectively into a few millions more of evolution, until the little stranger of the spirit has matured into a comparative fullness of being that may qualify it for the higher service of man on our planet, with an office on an Indian peak.

At another time, still in the Avenue Road, the same extraordinary person is, or rather was, to be found in summer seated on the grass in the garden, and imparting instruction to a knot of disciples mainly in skirts, like hers, of Indian cut. She has arrived at full mastery now; Madame

Blavatsky—"H.P.B." for reference—is dead, or rather has passed over to another stage of being, while still, of course, in active superintendence of the work. The creamy white of the draperies of the new instructress-in-chief is in harmony with her still beautiful hair; and every sparing touch of ornament bears its symbolic suggestion of the mysteries. The scene is perfect as a picture; it is almost Buddha under the Bo-tree, in full assurance of the perfect wisdom and the perfect peace, and ready to impart its secret to suffering humanity.

Once more, and she stands on the platform of some hall at the West End, packed with one of the most eminently respectable audiences in London. I miss the working-man in her following, I mean as a feature. The message he wants to hear is delivered usually at the other end of town. Her address is impeccable in its measured and restrained eloquence, its clarity, and all the graces of rhetoric, and it takes its stately march from beginning to end without a pause for a thought or a word. This is the more remarkable, because it is as abstruse as anything in the higher mathematics.

Another vision and she is at the Fabian Society, revisiting the glimpses of the moon of Socialism, almost as an act of grace. She has stood on that platform or others of the kind many a time before, in one instance, as we have seen, to glorify red ruin and the breaking up of laws, to rouse masses against classes, to inspire the terror of the Terror that is to come, if the people in possession do not

mend their ways. To-night it is quite a different tale. She is here to bless what she was ready to curse—wise theocracies uniting king and priest as governors, a docile people immutably fixed in their stations and pursuits, and as a result the only taste of the golden age ever vouchsafed to man. The Society listens in respectful silence, not of assent, but of courtesy. She is a guest; she was once a comrade; she was always straight according to her convictions—let her have her say without a jarring word. The debate that follows runs its course on these lines; and it is quite amusing to see how champion after champion of the wholly opposite way of thinking contrives to preserve his loyalty to his own political faith, without casting the slightest reflection upon hers. The buttons are on the foils all the time, or, to change the figure, it is a perfect egg dance in the order of ideas. Not a shell is broken, even when we hear that the virtuous king was universal banker and universal trustee, keeping so much of the revenue for the maintenance of the priests and the temples, so much for the civil administration, and laying out the rest for the benefit of his people, who had earned the whole, without troubling them to put their hands in their pockets for the satisfaction of a single want. Ask where it happened, it was naturally somewhere in India; ask when—almost before the beginning of days, as known to our calendars of mushroom growth.

A last vision—I trust only to this date—is of an aged lady still arrayed in the white of her sacerdotal function, and waiting patiently to cross

Piccadilly at flood time with the help of a policeman, and of a young lady in charge. Hats are raised here and there, but I am not quite sure that she is aware of them, in spite of the unfading brilliancy of the eyes. The step is cautious; the form stoops. Then I learn from the papers that she has come on one of her brief visits from India, to give another course of lectures for the benefit of the Western world.

The central theme of the lectures is a perfect unity—the immanence of God. Man is a spiritual intelligence sharing in God's eternity, and unfolding the divine powers of his Father, by means of reincarnation, through countless ages of progress. As all men partake in the Divine Nature all are unfolding towards happiness. Where, then, is there room for sorrow, since God is everywhere, and He is bliss?

This doctrine has reached the pulpits—that of The City Temple particularly—it has even reached Dean's Yard, a greater conquest still, for Archdeacon Wilberforce holds a congregation spellbound with the idea. He has not conquered The Yard, for The Yard is virtually Westminster Abbey; but the more significant fact is that The Yard has not conquered him. The frown of outraged British orthodoxy cannot prevail against him, though but for that, no doubt, he would long since have been a Bishop. He does not mind.

Another of his fancies, as they are estimated in that quarter, is the compelling power of simultaneous silent prayer in a concentration of the

whole nature on a desire for one particular good. Every Sunday, the lean mystic, who ought to have been born on the banks of the Ganges, reads a list of requests for aid of this kind, from sufferers of every description. Thus specialised, the practice has become quite a different thing in its cogency of appeal from the ordinary prayers of the Church Service for those troubled in mind or estate. The congregation sits or kneels, as though in trance, generally with eyes closed. It is a bold undertaking, since its efficacy is subject to the almost immediate test of the event. It has had remarkable success. Some years ago a lady student at one of the hospitals suddenly disappeared under extraordinary circumstances, and the whole country, to say nothing of her agonised family, was longing to know her fate. Her correspondence had been ransacked; the police had done their best; but all in vain. The Archdeacon mentioned the case from the pulpit, and urged the congregation to fix its mind on a petition for the discovery of a clue. A few hours later some urchins, trespassing in a copse in Richmond Park, came upon the body with a phial of poison by its side.

Dean's Yard did not half like the look of it, but it had to hold its peace. It is not without its own eccentricities of belief, which its extra-territorial position in regard to episcopal jurisdiction enables it to hold without fear of the pastoral staff. In select cases it has a kindly though a strictly unofficial eye on the Second Adventists. The increase of this sect is one of the most extraordinary signs of the time. It is one of the few that spread

among the people; the others mostly begin with the *dilettanti* of religious thought, and end with them. In such exalted spheres the attraction is not so much belief for its practical uses in the battle of life; it is rather belief about beliefs, as one of the luxuries of religious and often mystical speculation. The people, on the contrary, demand a faith they can hold with the tremendous clutch of their manifold and ever-pressing needs. They want the medicine that will do them good in the crises of their poverty and their helplessness. I have seen a whole congregation prostrate, or on all fours, waiting with groans and cries for a Second Coming that may take place at any moment of the day or night. "Here! Now! To-morrow perhaps!" at the latest, and the Redeemer in the skies, with hosts of attendant angels, to chain the devil, for a thousand years, with a prospect of one more great upheaval at the end of it that shall bind him for ever. And with the Coming, an immediate transfer of all the rule of principalities and powers into the hands of the new aristocracy of sainthood that now lies prone in a tabernacle over a chandler's shop, or to its kindred congregations in the like humble setting all over the English-speaking world—particularly in America.

Their ministrant on this occasion is no mitred member of the hierarchies as they stand in the accepted faiths of Christendom, but haply an ex-army pensioner or policeman, who drops his h's in his utter unconcern about any form of speech but the Unknown Tongue. This is still a tongue

unknown even to himself, for you are to understand that he is merely a channel of communication. He says what it is put into him to say; and he needs an interpreter as much for himself as for the congregation. The real speaker is Very God, delivering an oracle.

Help is at hand. When the minister takes his seat again, with every sign of extreme fatigue in body and in mind, a sister rises with the same divinely given power of interpretation, specialized in herself, as the power of deliverance was specialized in the other; and turns the message, still without the aspirates if you like, into the current speech of the class to which most of them belong. She could not parse her version, to save her life, still less could she repeat it in the original; her sole duty and power is to get it Englished as the words are put into her mind by the higher power. Its burden is Here! and Now! the skies may open to the dazzling visitation of glory as you walk home through the miry ways to-night. And then? In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, every one of you, the half-epileptic washerwoman, the toil-worn street-sweeper and what not, will be suddenly called upon to take a leading place in the governance of the world, and to undergo a full and complete transformation of flesh and spirit for the change.

Their term of service is the thousand years for the start. To equip them for the higher calling their bodies will be charged with absolute incorruptibility, their minds with all the mighty secrets and the mighty powers needed for the

guidance of the herd of unregenerate humanity committed to their care.

I walked home with the one who had taken me to the service, landlady of a humble lodging-house, and old acquaintance. She had the full certainty of her mission and of her destiny.

"'Behold, I come quickly,' it is written; what more do you want?"

"Yes; but it has been written over nineteen hundred years and yet——"

"Ah, they didn't know how to read the prophecies; we do," and she drenched me with a shower of texts. "The world is too wicked; the saints must rule."

"Yourself perhaps to be a ruler under the King?"

"Under the King of Glory, please."

"Would your knowledge, your habits of life, your experience——?"

She turned impatiently from me: "All that will be given to His saints."

"And those who have gone to their graves through the long night of waiting?"

"They will rise to bear their part—if they are saints, mind you! It is written: you must not argue about it: we are instruments: all will be given to us in full measure. Believe."

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THRESHING OUT

THE time has come to thresh out a few sheaves. Our age differs from its forerunners, mainly in the individual's cultivated sense of himself. All the religions, of course, have tried to give him that; but where, before, it was the sense of what he owed, it is now only the sense of what is due to him. The principle is the creditor as the crown of things, in his craze for 'personality,' a hybrid of etymology, enjoying the freedom of every city. Hitherto there has been some idea of the obligation to put the whole before the part. It is mind your own business to-day; and, if you want farther guidance, consult the looking-glass.

The change has brought a thousand others in its train. How simple the issues in politics when the two old-fashioned parties had their square stand-up fight, and there was no room within them, or no inclination for finer shades of subdivision. With us it was represented by the occasional set-to between Lord Palmerston and the Tiverton butcher. 'Pam' went down for his annual address to constituents; and the butcher, who, as a free and independent elector, did not happen to think much of him, told him so to his face. The winner of a hundred fights

in Parliament replied; *The Times* came out with a verbatim report; the country had its laugh, and there was an end of it, till next year.

Think of but one day of Mr. Asquith's, compared with the three hundred and sixty-five of the other—parties by the dozen, movements, deputations, secret exits and entrances to his own house, with bodyguards against occasional throwers of the hatchet. Every one of these persons is astir for others only by accident or necessity; his banner bears the device of his own hand.

The major prophets of the movement are of great standing and power, with Ibsen leading the way in influence, if not absolutely in the order of time. All or nothing, and all for just what I see and no more. How different from old Carlyle, who exercised the Censorial office in our Victorian time. He would be but superficially described as a Primitive Indigestion brooding over the Seven Days of Creation, and finding it all a mistake. He saved himself in time by the ethic of the Everlasting Yea. To be fair, however, in the decline of his power, he came perilously near Superman. Some of his heroes were hardly distinguishable from the asses of self-will, and of that terrible variety the Zebra or Wild Ass of the plains, whose kick of sheer high spirits is death. The favourite diversion of this animal, I can but suspect, is to masquerade in the skin of the Laughing Lion.

Blessedness, the sweet of adversity for the building up of character, self-control, self-denial,

the old beatitudes, no matter what their theological setting, the old new birth of the spirit into its real self-hood, in one word, all that differentiates the finished article from the mere mistakes of the potter, these, I think, in their struggle for the recovery of the old ethical pattern, are going to be the note of a new time. Leave the others to live from a single function, mainly physical: man is a harmony.

Ibsen's *Brand* is one of these melancholy failures in the attempt to make a single organ do the work of all. He knows no hindrance, no misgiving. It is not pessimism because pessimism is a positive quality, it is a sheer 'I will'—the thing I see, the thing I want idealized as rounded perfect and all-sufficing, and pursued at all costs with no corrective but the raw result in failure. What would the gentle Matthew Arnold have thought of that? *Peer Gynt* again, another self-absorbed monster of the same cast. Nietzsche—now being white-washed into a missionary, by shamed interpreters who themselves need a touch of the brush—much the same. And with them, as it seems, on the surface, an attack in form on all the old pieties, symbolized as morality in the governance of life. Every man to do as he pleases, and let the best man win. And what driving force brought to the work, the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn for the giftless, and, as a backing, German science and German learning. For absolutes, you cannot go beyond that. Dionysus is out for the fun of the fair, and woe to Apollo who stands in his way with the antiquated rules. Mr. Oscar Levy has

made a gallant attempt to save his client by showing that all his doctrine, rightly interpreted, is but a protest against individualism in the wrong persons—that is against ninety-nine hundredths of the human race. Their business is not to be levelled up to knowledge, but levelled down to obedience and acquiescence.

There is much scholarship in it all, and as little wisdom; and in the occasional difference between these is the underlying fallacy of the whole movement. Our local variety of that fallacy is the sordid Shakespeare-Bacon controversy, which once bid fair to make us the laughing-stock of the world. Bacon was the most learned person of his time; Shakespeare, as its reputed best writer, was one of the least learned; therefore Bacon must have written the plays. Shakespeare was a very low fellow: all minds of this calibre seem instinctively to rage against him. "Dost thou sleep only?" says the chamberlain of the Vatican, as with ivory gavel he taps the brow of the dead Pope. The Pope goes on keeping as quiet as Shakespeare by Avonside.

Mr. Shaw is the new self-realization preached through a megaphone, and still but Master Slender or Aguecheek with the strong word if he dies for it. To wit:

"With the single exception of Homer, there is no eminent writer, not even Sir Walter Scott, whom I can despise so utterly as I despise Shakespeare when I measure my mind against his. The intensity of my impatience with him occasionally reaches such a pitch, that it would positively be a

relief to me to dig him up and throw stones at him, knowing as I do how incapable he and his worshippers are of understanding any less obvious form of indignity. To read *Cymbeline* and to think of Goethe, of Wagner, of Ibsen, is, for me, to imperil the habit of studied moderation of statement which years of public responsibility as a journalist have made almost second nature in me." La you now!

A pretty journalist with this vile rhodomontade for his standard of the decencies of the craft.

The lack of critical faculty, to say nothing of education, in it all is really without excuse. Shakespeare will never be understood till we study him, not merely as the actor-manager, but as the author-manager. He had to fill his theatre, and he could not turn out a new *Hamlet* or a new *Othello* every time he wanted a change of bill. He probably took *Cymbeline* out of the famous wooden box as it had come to him with the other properties, touched it up in a night and a day, played it as long as he could, threw it back into the box again, and when, finally, he shook the dust of London from his feet, left the whole precious load there for Hemyng and Condell to rescue for posterity years after, less by man's contrivance than by the grace of God.

This accident, and his supreme indifference to the plays, as distinct perhaps from the *Sonnets*, made the Shakespeare canon. His emendatory touches are easily traced by anyone with the slightest sense of literature. Look out for the bits of fine gold. There are such in *Cymbeline*. Who—of course with the single exception of Mr. Shaw—could

have written "Hark! hark, the lark" or "Fear no more the heat o' the sun"? The line of cleavage is quite clear as between what might have been written by anybody, and what could have been written by but one alone. You may give the rest to Anon., and welcome, or to Bacon, if you like. It was careless of their author to have failed to enter them at Stationers' Hall, but the giants of old were like that. It is a case of put yourself in his place—if Mr. Shaw is able to do that in regard to any living organism in creation. 'My habit of studied moderation'—Hark! hark! "the cox-comb bird."

It is needless to labour the point of Scott. Every work of every kind is to be judged by its historic standpoint—what it did in and for its time. Never mind his superficial faults, most of them due to haste, think of his colossal achievement, and of the glowing tribute of gratitude from contemporaries for a whole literature, revolutionized in the outlook throughout the world.

Homer—but really why go on?

I came late to a Fabian lecture one day, but unhappily still in time to hear Mr. Shaw sum up the life-work of Darwin as that of a 'pigeon fancier.'

A few made wry faces, but the Fabian giggle ran round the room.

"He is always so cheerful," said one.

"So merry," corrected another.

"You can't help laughing," added a third, "even when you don't know what he's talking about."

All this may be good business from the height of the trestles at a fair, but, in my humble judgment, it makes a poor contribution to thought. The same thing may be said of the crude blasphemies of Blanco Posnet as a sort of first essay, and of the 'swear-word' of another play only for the culmination. The portentous prefaces to these productions are of the same order of technic. But why not print them at the top of the page, and treat the play as the notes? The wretched girding at morals throughout is all of a piece: at best, it is only one moral more, and a bad one.

"You make a great fuss about him," once said a brilliant Irishwoman to me: "we have a man like that at the cross-roads of every village snacking every passer-by for the benefit of the crowd."

"So, for that matter," I said, "had the Achaians of the despised *Iliad*."

"Yes, but Agamemnon was at hand with his truncheon, so it came out all right."

It seemed to account for much, especially for that wellnigh invariable depreciation of the English, to whom he owes all but the very breath of his nostrils.

The lines still rang in my ears:—

> The coxcomb bird so talkative and grave
> That from his cage cries cuckold . . . and knave;
> Though many a passenger he rightly call,
> You hold him no philosopher at all.

In this case it is no doubt complicated by certain misadventures of inherited character. The Shaws,

it seems, were always proud of their standing as "dacent people." The last of their line to date tries hard to disclaim all share in these pretensions, but nature is too much for him. Hence the portraits, with their artful arrangements of the lights to show the man of mystery, or the readings of the hand, offered freely to the Press or to the biographers. And, above all, hence the fatuous family tree, drawn up for the benefit of an admirer, and as I seem to remember, a dreary plateau of squireens with a knight as makeshift for an alp. But of course this is given only as contribution to a science of eugenics, that is beginning to cover a multitude of sins against common sense and even common decency. In one of his speeches Mr. Shaw described himself as roaming London, almost in vain, to find a woman to whom he might condescend to throw the eugenical handkerchief—in the sole interest, of course, of the improvement of the race.

The portentous development of the organ of Self-Esteem may explain all. It would be a kindness on his part to leave it to the College of Surgeons, with due notice of the bequest, in advance, to give them time to see about the making of the bottle.

Yet withal it seems but a poor conception of a career. Test his whole output by the method of the Virgilian lots, and the result is almost invariably some brutal insult to an honoured name. For the love of—well, say The Life Force, let us get this spirit out of our hearts and out of our lives.

The deliberate cultivation of individuality takes equally curious and arbitrary forms in other quarters. This most commonly happens when it is akin to the process of watering a stick. The Italian Futurists and Cubists have been especially fortunate in the issue of their attempt to put the cart before the horse.

They were a number of young men who started with the assumption that they had a right to be somebody in particular, as in other circumstances they might have said they had a right to bread and life. They were quite frank about it: as artists they saw there was scant chance of distinction for them in a rivalry with the old masters who held the field. But one thing remained—to invent a new art, and at the same time to proclaim loudly the patriotic duty of scrapping all the old. Youth will be served: Italy's art treasures were really Italy's ruin: away with them to the funeral pyre. Here at once was individuality by the short cut, and with both a consciousness and a method.

The next step was the propaganda by the puff. They accordingly began to make themselves a nuisance by provoking little conflicts with the police, as obstructionists of the public highway. When they were taken before the magistrate, they made violent speeches from the dock, to the reporters; and, if things still looked unpromising for an effective curtain, they got themselves fined for an insult to the Bench. With that they went out to lunch, by preference at a window open to the view from the street, and wound up the banquet by toasting each other's individuality for the

benefit of the crowd. The incident was then circularized, in their name, to the foreign Press, principally our own, with a request for a notice. They took extraordinary pains with this part of the work, for in many instances they had quite pat the names and addresses of prominent persons on the staff. The notices began to see the light, at first in derision, afterwards on a footing that gave them the status of an item of the foreign news. The agent in advance had now done his work; and when his employers came to London, they found London ready for them.

The mechanical principle of this new movement was somewhat like that of the motor, progress by shock. The old painting dealt with harmonies in form and colour, composition, the exquisite niceties of effect in the values and variations of light. The new had to discard all these for a method of expression by the variation of geometrical forms. A mass of cubes, squares or circles came to signify a storm, a street scene, a public meeting, or a parting of lovers. On a first view you seemed to see nothing but a Walpurgis night dance of the illustrations to Euclid, but a second, under instruction, was understood to reveal the basic principle of the subject in its arrangement of these angular shapes. In other words, the essential idea was that you had only to transfer the properties of one set of physical phenomena to another to produce a new art. Thus certain French authors, of a somewhat earlier date, discovered that words had odours as well as sounds, and accordingly began to write by an organ, till

then chiefly associated with the sense of smell. In each case, the new art with the new individuality behind it was launched on its triumphant career. In London, at least, the Futurists became quite the fashion, and they probably went home to report " sold out " as the issue of the venture.

As a rule, the more you leave your originality to take care of itself the better for everybody concerned. Yet it admits of one mode of cultivation which is entirely of the right sort. Flaubert touched on that, in one of his counsels to Maupassant. The latter, then I believe in his nonage, complained that his work seemed hardly his own, and went to his mentor to ask him how he was to become himself. " Wait " was the answer in effect : " yourself is the last achievement, not the first." He meant that you had to begin by clearing away the accretions of the habit of imitation. But how he would have raged in his glorious way, if he had been taken to mean a mere trick of eccentricity.

All the arts at present have a tendency to mistake this pinchbeck substance for the true metal. You have it in music, rapidly degenerating into a series of imitative effects in the pattering of rain in a shower, the booming of the guns in a battle, with the artist at the big drum, now something of a gymnast in his gyrations, lording it over the rest of the orchestra. The true function of this divinest of all the arts is to express the inexpressible : it should know nothing of definition.

We have seen it in politics, with syndicalism as the new bid for originality in the popular party,

though it is no more than a sheer reaction towards the profit-mongering of the old guilds. The Snowdens, the Macdonalds, and, if he has left a successor, the Hardies, notwithstanding his occasional trend to eccentricity of orbit, will soon set that right. Such men are in training for full statesmanship. Their brief holidays are spent in touring the world, and especially the empire, for the study of problems at first hand.

Their great opportunity will come at the close of our world war. They have to show that voluntary enlistment will beat conscription at its own game, without the loss of a single liberty of a free people. That will be, not one, but all the nails for the coffin of militarism. Why not organize the school courses of one sex for the teaching of drill, in the absolute perfection of efficiency for the parade ground and the line of battle; of the other, for nursing in the field? This, and a real volunteer movement to follow, in place of the old one starved and snubbed out of existence by the military caste, would do the rest. There need be no element of compulsion in it from first to last. The drill and the nursing would still be a matter of free choice in recreation on the part of all concerned, parents and children alike. Ninety per cent would probably come in at a bound at the start, and the remnant would not long stand out. Football and other diversions of Kipling's "oaf" would still take their proper place, and still a good one. He has made ample amends for the earlier errors of his ways in his recent glowing tribute to voluntaryism in national defence

as "the new thing in a new world." Let us have it everywhere and not in religion alone; it is our British note.

Keep the faddists out of all these vital energies of our national life. The old ways are still very good ways, with due adaptation to the needs of the time; and in saying this I bate no jot of my wildest hopes for the democratic cause.

A French youth, of more parts than judgment, was once ill-advised enough to worry Anatole France for a prophecy—on "the literature of to-morrow." Would it be Idealism—Patriotism, æsthetic and philosophic—Subjectivism, with all its doctrines of the exception—Triumph of democracy? What had the future in store for lads of gold all agog for the new thing?

The veteran's answer was a cold douche: "Never mind about to-morrow; that will take care of itself; the only future within our reach is the present and the past. The finest epochs of all art have been those of harmony and tradition, when the individual did not have it all his own way. As for your precious list, I cannot in the least understand what it all means. Where I am able to apprehend anything of the new literature, I may say that much of it is narrow, brutal, gross, without taste, without the measure which is the all in all. It fears neither to shock nor to displease. It thinks it has done everything when it has offended decency, and outraged all the proprieties."

What would he have thought of Shaw on Shakespeare? I saw them once together on the same

platform. The irony of the situation, if one could have had the faintest idea of the other's concept of letters and of life!

This good breeding of the pen is a great point with the French. Literature is the medium in which they render their idea of the gentleman. They have absolutely no mercy for the bull in the china shop on the search for emphasis.

With our younger writers of the day, such curiosity as there is about the future takes a more rational turn. "In that noddle of yours," says Arnold Bennett to aspiring youth, "is everything necessary to development, for the achieving of happiness, and you are absolutely lord over the noddle will you but exercise your powers of lordship, self-control, in a word, mastery and common sense." And he goes on to glorify "the intensive culture of the reason—habit forming by concentration." The wisdom of Marcus Aurelius and of Epictetus is generally good enough for him. Wells follows, or rather leads, very much in the same line—efficiency. Archer, who has done so much for the innovators, is still our greatest sobering force. The last still awaits the full recognition he deserves. Perhaps his 'manner' is his hindrance in a self-advertising age. It is marked only by his fervour for truth and fairplay, and by his attitude of discipleship towards a whole order of great ideas on which assuredly he is the best qualified to lay down the law.

Alas, how we sometimes play at being alive! At a college near Philadelphia, it seems, they train girls into "superwomen," by a system which

sends them out into the air in all weathers—in waterproofs for the rainy days—to write their exercises. Poor little things, and poorer bigger ones to follow, one can but fear. But probably their fate, if they are not called to repentance by a timely cold, may prove the best corrective of all. Superman is but a figure for the Fifth of November in our streets—stuffed with rubbish by the nature of his being. Those of higher faculty owe infinite help and even deference to those of lower. The strong man rules—himself, and serves the others. While the effigy holds its place as a god in Germany, Germany must be on its way to the abyss. She was once re-made by a literature of the right sort; she is going to be unmade by a literature of the wrong. May all of us be saved from too striking a victory, lest we run the same course.

A fateful course it is, a veritable Fortune's wheel. The sufferings of a people beget its virtues; its virtues beget its faculty; its faculty, its arrogance; its arrogance, its decay. All history, Jew and Gentile, tells the same tale—our own is no exception. Is there no way of lashing down the wheel at power wisely won and wisely used? The whole problem of life is there. Efficiency is too narrowly construed, even by the best of us. Bennett's "noddle" is but its journeyman; the soul must still be master from first to last. By all means learn the job of your workshop, whatever it may be, founding a science, or cooking a beefsteak. But your head and your hands are not enough; the true source and sustainer of all the

powers must still be the heart. I ask for more, and ever more, of that in the current energies of the day.

I wrote *John Street* in the hope of giving this organ a lift to its place, within the measure of my powers. I began it on quite a different scheme, but much of it was so obliging as to write itself as I went on. It was all I could do; the best of us can say no more.

THE END

# INDEX


About, 85, 143
Adam, Madame, 140–6, *v.* Lamber
*Alabama* Arbitration, 93–8
Alfonso of Spain, 113, 116, 120, 121, 122
Amateur casual, 56
America, art, 208
— Centennial Exhibition, 206
— cities, local independence of, 127
— Copyright, 209
— democracy, 217–219
— Gladstone on, 98–107
— Literature, old and new, 206, 207, 216, 217
— Rip Van Winkle, the new, 216
— settlers in Paris, 207, 208
— typical American of future, 219, 220
— W. H. H., 209–216
— Wickedest Man in, 71
Anarchy, philosophic, 49–51
— in Spain, 111
Anglo-French Exhibition, 46, 53
Anonymity of Press, 66
Apprenticeship, arts and crafts, 27
Archer, William, 330
Art, American, 208
— — art dealers, 34
— British, teaching schools, 31–34
— French, academic and other, 238–242
Art, Italian, Cubists, etc., 325
— Russian Court painter, 191
— — battle painter, 158–170

Balzac, 136
Barrie, 2, 270
Bastien Lepage, 143, 248
Batignolles, the, 89
Bennett, Arnold, 330, 331
Bertillon system, 229, 230
Besant, Annie, 304–12
— Walter, 305
Birmingham, 125, 126
Bismarck, 145, 180–182
Black, William, 62, 63, 67, 71, 72, 290, 291
Blanc, Louis, 142
Blavatski, Madame, 306, 307, 308, 310
Blöwitz, 137, 140
Bohemia of the Press, 67–72
Bookshops, secondhand, 42, 43
Bouguereau, 238
Bow Church, Cheapside, 8
— — Mile End, 8
Bowes, Hely, 140
Bradlaugh, 305, 306, 309
*Brand*, Ibsen's, 319
Brandes, 185
Brazza, African explorer, 250–3
Bright, John, 54, 293
Bromley-by-Bow, palace of, 5, 6, 15
Brontës, the, 259, 260
Brown, Madox, 41

Brownell, 211, 217
Browning, Robert, 255, 260–3
Brownings, the, and Furnivall, 39, and *v.* Corkrans, 260–2
Bürckhardt, 185
Butler, Samuel (Erewhon), 34, 295

Cabanel, 238
Campbell Clarke, 138, 140
Carlos, Don, 111–113
Carlyle, 255, 259, 318
Carpenter, Edward, 187, 255–7
Cartagena, Naval mutiny, 111
Castelar, 108, 109, 112, 113, 119
Cavaignac and the Reds, 21
Chamberlain, 125, 126
Chartists at Kennington Common, 11
Chaucer and Stratford-atte-Bowe, 7, 8
Cheshire Cheese Tavern, 274
Chesterton, G. K., 300
Chinese Giant, 78–81
Clemenceau, 224, 225
Clubs—English: Bohemian, 67, 68
— — Fireside, 289
— — National Liberal, 294
— — Omar Khayyám, 294
— — Reform, 290–3
— — Savage, 68, 288, 290
— — Whitefriars, 288
— French, "Mirlitons," 295
— — Union, 296
Cockburn, Sir Alexander, 94–97
Coins and medals, 26
*Commune*, 49, 50, 111, 306
Coningsby, Robert, 54–8, 67
Conscription, 113, 328
Cook, Captain, fate of his ship, 3
Cook, Sir E. T., 277
Coppée, 152
Coquelin, the Elder, 223
Corkrans, the, 135, 136, 260–2, 266
Corot, 132
Correspondents, our own, 135–140, 158
Costermonger articles, 57, 58, 66, 67
Courbet, 238
Coventry Patmore, 298, 299
Crawfords, the, 138, 140
Crimean war, 24, 25
Cruickshank reformed, 264, 265
Cubists, 325
Cushing, Caleb, 94–8

*Daily Mail*, 74
*Daily News*, 137–40, 271–85
*Daily Telegraph*, 73, 74, 137, 138
Daudet, Alphonse, 199
Davidson, poet and journalist, 278, 279
Degas, 48, 238
Dickens, Charles, 72, 73, 260, 270
Didon, Père, 246
Disraeli, 98, 99
Doré, Gustave, 239–42
Dostoieffsky, 175, 202
Dublin, 127
Dumas, the Younger, 85
Dundonald, Lord, 20

Edinburgh, as a capital, 126, 127
Editor, passing of the, 275
Eichhorn, 176
Empire, Second French, 76, 77
Ems telegram, 181, 182
Erewhon dinner, 295
"Ernestine, La Belle," 88
Eugénie, Empress, 85
Evans, Dr., 87
Exhibitions, Anglo-French, 46, 53
— Centennial, U.S.A., 206

Exhibition, Paris, 1867, 76–92
— Verestchagin's, 167–9

Fabian Society, 310, 311
Faiths, City Temple and Westminster Abbey, 312
— Second Adventists, 313–16
— Theosophy, 304–12
Father, my, 1, 14, 24, 44, 74
Ferry, Jules, 223
Feuillet, Octave, 85, 86, 199
Figueras, 108, 114, 120
Fireside Club, 289
Flaubert, 85, 143, 327
Forbes, Archibald, 281, 282
France, Anatole, 129, 275, 329, 330
France, art, 238–42
— literature, some schools, 242, 243
— local independence, 129
— orators, pulpit, 246–9
— *passim*, ch. iv., vi., x–xii., xvi., xvii., xx., xxi.
Freycinet, 143
Freytag, 175
Furnivall and the Brownings, 39, 40
— at Working Men's College, 36–8
— sculling club for girls, 38, 39
Futurists, 325

Galliffet, General, 143
Gambetta, 139, 141–3, 157, 222, 225, 226
Geneva Arbitration, 92–8
German workmen, 27, 30
Germany, the new, 171–5
Gervinus, 178
Giesebrecht, 179
Girardin, 88, 142, 143
Gladstone, 98–107, 293
Glasgow art, 124, 125
Goethe, 321
Gooch, History and Historians, 175
Gorki, 159, 200
Greenwood, James, 56
Grimms, the, 176
Guyot, Yves, 48

Hardie, Keir, 328
Harris, Joel C., 216
— Lake, 211
Harrison, Frederic, 41
Hawarden Castle, 99, 100, 101
Her Majesty's Seals, 24
Hermitage Picture Gallery, 189
Hill, Frank, 271, 272
*History of Our Own Times*, 61, 62
History, Prussianized, 175, 180–186
Howard, Mr., 21–3
Hughes, "Tom," 36
Hugo, V., 136
— — funeral, 154
— — grandchildren, 148–51
— — grandfather, art of being, 149–50
— — king uncrowned, 147
— — Madame, 154
— — return to Paris, 151
— — *salon* in Paris, 151–4
— — Wagner's lampoon on, 155
— — will, 155
Hurlbert, W. H., 98, 99
Huxley, 41
Hyacinthe, Père, 246–9

Ibsen, 175, 318, 319, 321
Interviewing, 97–107
Irish Exhibition at Olympia, 62
Irving, Henry, 64
Isabella of Spain, 108, 113, 115, 118, 122

James, Henry, 209, 268, 269
— King, palace at Bromley, 6, 15
— William, 217
Jefferson Davis, 100, 104
Journalism and capital, 285–7
Journalism old and new, 271–87

Karr, Alphonse, 88
Kingsley, Charles, 40
Kipling, 269, 328
Kremlin, Moscow, 203, 204

"Labby," 293, 294
Lake Harris, 211
Lamartine, 136
Lamber, Juliette, 140, *v.* Adam
Lang, Andrew, 273–5, 281
Leconte de Lisle, 143, 152
Lefèbvre, the painter, 238
Legitimists, Spanish, 111
Leigh's School of Art, 31–4
Leo, German historian, 178
Lesseps, 143, 231–233
Library, Imperial Russian, 192
Lincoln's Inn Fields, chambers, 74
Liverpool, 125, 130
Lockroy, Madame, 152
London, return to, 268, 271
— tyranny of, 123, 124, 126, 127, 129, 130
Ludlow at Working Men's College, 36

McCarthys, the, 59–65, 93
Macdonald, Ramsay, 328
MacMahon's "16th of May," 141, 142
Madrid, 108–10
Makart, Austrian painter, 166
Manchester art dealers, 34
*Manchester Guardian*, 123, 135
Manchester, my stay in, 123–5, 129–134
Manet, 238
Marks, of Working Men's College, 41, 42
Marston, the actor, 67
Martin (*v.* Maconochie), 54
Masefield's Pompey the Great, 275
Mathilde, Princesse, 85
Maupassant, 327
Maurice, J. D., at W.M.C., 35, 36, 41
Maurras, for Church and King, 246
Maximilian, Emperor, 77, 91
Max O'Rell, 289
Mechanics' Institutes, 36
Medals and coins, 26
Meissonier, 160, 238
Mercedes, Queen of Spain, 115
Metternich, Princess, 86
Meurice, Paul, 152
Meynells, the, 298–303
Michel, Louise, 226–8
Millet, the painter, 132
"Mirlitons" Club, 295
Moltke, 169
Monsabré, Père, 246
Montpensier, intrigues in Spain, 115
Morley, John, editor of *Star*, 93
Moscow, 203, 204
Munkácsy, painter, 241
Music-hall stars, 271
Music, modern, 327

Napoleon III, 21, 49, 91, 92
Nash's London, 20
National Liberal Club, 294
Niebuhr, 175–177
Nietzsche, 184–6, 319
Night in a workhouse, 56
— in Belgrave Square, 57

*No. 5 John Street*, 52, 287, 332
Norfolk Street, Strand, 2
*Nouvelle Revue, La*, 143
Novikoff, Madame de, 197, 198

Oliphant, Laurence, 211, 212
Ouida, 83–5, 208

Palmer, Roundell, Sir, 94, 95
Palmerston, defence of Canada, 93, 317
— and Spanish marriages, 115
— and the Tiverton butcher, 317, 318
Panama scandal, 230–4
Panslavist movement, Moscow, 204
Paris, exhibition of 1887, 76–92
— first visit, 46
— settlement in, 134
Parkinson, J., 291–293
*Parnellism and Crime*, 65
Paul, Herbert, 272–273, 276
Payn, James, 290, 291
*Peer Gynt*, 319
Peter the Great, 188, 193
*Pétroleuses*, 90
Phil May, 280
Picture dealers, 130–134
Pistrucci, medallist, 25
Polytechnics, modern, 37
Pourtales, Madame de, 87
Pre-Raphaelism, 32
Press, anonymity of, 66
— Bohemia of the, 67–72
— correspondence, old and new, 135–140
— night work on the, 279–281
— prentice work for, 52–58
Prim, Marshal, 108
Prisons for debtors, 68–70
Proudhon on women, 144
'Prue' Meynell, 302, 303
Prussia, King of, in Paris, 77, 88
Prussianizing historians, 180–186
— — Dahlmann, 180
— — Droysen, 180
— — Duncker, 180
— — Sybel, 179, 180–182
— — Treitschke, 179, 182–184
Pugilists, old and new, 270–271
Pyrenees, crossing by diligence, 114

Queretaro, tragedy of, 77

Raeburn, 132
Ranke, 177, 178
Rapson, Professor, 289
Rattazzi, Madame, 87
Ravachol, 228–230
Reade, Charles, 268
Reclus, Élie, 48, 49, 51, 52
Reclus, Élisée, 48–51
Reform Club, 72, 290–3
Renan, 86, 152
Repnin, Russian painter, 159
Republic in Spain, 109–112
Reuter on sentiment and business, 284, 285
*Revue des Deux Mondes*, 143
*Revue, La Nouvelle*, 143
Robertson, Forbes, as art student, 34
Robinson, Sir J., 281–285, 290
Rochefort, 225–226
Rodin, 239
Rome, my journey to, 205
Rossetti, Dante G., 41
Rothschild, 87
Rouvier and French finance, 223–224
— Madame, "Claude Vignon," 224
Roze, Marie, 88
Ruskin, 36, 255, 259
Russell, Sir Edward, 64
Russia, Boyar type, 193–195

Russia, Court painter, 191
— Gorki in exile, 200
— later writers, 203
— Moscow, Kremlin of, 203–204
— Novikoff, Mde. de, 197–198
— *salon*, Russian, a, 195
— Tolstoy, later work, 201
— Turguenieff, *vide* 339
— woman of culture, a, 196, 197

Sainte-Beuve, 86
St. John's Wood, 17, 19
Sala, 72, 73
*Salons*, 297–303
— Adam, Madame, 140–143
— Corkran, the, 136
— English modern, 297
— French old, 297
— Meynell, the, 298–301
— Russian, 195
Sargent, 166, 208
Savage Club, 68, 288–290
Say, Léon, 143
Schneider, 88
Schuyler, Eugene, 188, 205
— Montgomery, 211
Science and art department, 30, 31
Seeley, Professor, 41
Semitism, anti-, 183
Senior, W., 276
Seven Stars Inn, Bromley, 7
Shakespeare, Shaw on, 320–322
Shaw, Bernard, 200, 320–324
Simon, Jules, 48, 223
Skobeleff, 145
Snowden, Philip, 328
Sorbonne, the, 223
Spain, Alfonso, King of, 113
— Amadeus, King of, 108, 120
— anarchist, 111
— Barcelona insurrection, 114
— Cortes, debate in the, 110
— Figueras and the Reds, 114
Spain, Isabella dethroned, 108
— Isabella and her dwarf, 118–122
— old and new, 110, 113
— opera in war time, 110
— Republic in, 108–112, 122
— Santa Cruz, mad curé of, 112
— Serrano, Marshal, 112
— "Spanish Marriages" intrigue, 115
— state of siege, 113
— students, University, 109
Spielhagen, 175
Sponging houses, 68
*Sprouts, Mr., his Opinions*, 67
Spy system in France, 234–237
*Standard, The*, Paris office, 137, 140
Stanley and his rival, 250–253
*Star, The*, 56, 64, 93
Stevenson, R. L., 268
Stratford-atte-Bowe of Chaucer, 8
Sudermann's Magda and Tennyson's Guinevere, 258
Superman, 184, 185, 318, 331
Superwoman, 330
Swinburne and Watts-Dunton, 265, 267
Syndicalism, 327

Taine, 85
Talmage, De Witt, 211
Taylor, John Edward, art sale, 132
Tennyson, 255, 257–259
Thackeray in Paris, 136
Theresa, Paris singer, 88, 243–245
Thomson, Francis, 299, 300, 303
*Times, The*, Paris correspondent, 138–140
Tolstoy, 175, 195, 201
Treitschke, 179

*Tribune*, New York, 108
Trochu, General, and Wagner, 156
Troitska Monastery, treasures of, 204
*Truth*, Paris correspondent of, 139
Tsar in Paris, 88
Turguenieff, 143, 159, 175, 198, 199, 202
Tyndall, Professor, 41

Uhrich, General, 146
*Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 18
Union Club, Paris, 296

Verestchagin, 158–170, 199
— battle pictures—Asia, Central, 160, 164
— — — British India, 160
— — — Russo-Turkish, 161
— character and aims, 159, 162
— Court favour, loss of, 161, 162
— Exhibition at Berlin, 167–169
— peasant servant, 163
— studio in France, 158, 162
— temper and quarrels, 164, 169
— untimely end, 170
Victorian era, 5, 254–260
Vienna, 165–167
"Vignon, Claude"—Mde. Rouvier, 224
Vigny, Alfred de, 136

Wagner, 155–157, 184, 321
Wallace, A. R., on his own time, 255
Ward, Geneviève, 124
Watt, A. P., as literary agent, 270
Watts-Dunton as friend of Genius, 263–267
Wellington and the Chartists, 12
Wells, H. G., 270, 330
Wharton, Edith, 208
W. H. H., 209–216
— influence on women, 212–213
— trial, a famous, 214
Whistler, J., 267
Whitefriars Club, 289
Whitehouse, F., of *The Daily Telegraph*, 88
Wickedest Man in America, 71
Wilberforce, Archdeacon, 312, 313
Wilson, E. D. J., of *The Times*, 64–66, 276
Working-class Exhibition, Anglo-French, 46, 53
Working Men's College, 35–43
*World, The*, New York, 94, 158, 209, 210
Wright, Hagberg, 200
Wyon, Benjamin, medallist, 24, 27
— William, R. A., medallist, 25

Zangwill, on America as melting-pot, 219, 220
Zichy, Count, Russian Court painter, 191
Zola, influence on Germany, 174

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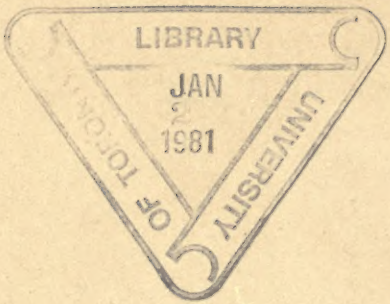
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